$4.00

# FLORIDA Wildlife™

November/December 2007

MyFWC.com

## Wastewater wetlands

Celebrating 60 years of
## Florida Wildlife

## Fishing for trouble

A special group of
## officers

# 2008 Florida Wildlife Art Contest

*Great Barred Owls by Donald Rust*
*Winner of the 2002 Florida Wildlife Art Contest*

***Florida Wildlife* Magazine is pleased to announce its 2008 art contest. Winning entries will be published in the July/August 2008 issue of *Florida Wildlife* and posted on the magazine's Web site. Signed and numbered limited-edition prints of the first place winning artwork will be available to *Florida Wildlife* readers.**

## Entries

- Contest is open to all artists at least 18 years old, regardless of residency.
- Participants may submit up to three entries.
- Entries must be unframed artwork submitted as a 35mm slide, 4" x 5" transparency or high-resolution digital scan on CD (300 dpi and no smaller than 8.5" x 11")
- Entries must be labeled with artist's name and name of artwork.
- Entries must include a completed and signed entry form available from www.floridawildlifemagazine.com or 1-866-967-5600.
- E-mail entries will not be accepted.
- Entries must be received by Friday, Feb. 29, 2008. Entries received after this date will be automatically disqualified.
- Entries will be returned beginning in May. Notification of contest results will be mailed to all participants.

## Rules

- Entries must be contestant's original creation and may not be copied from photographs or other artists' works. Photographs taken by the artist may be used as references.
- Computers or other mechanical devices may not be used in creating, editing or manipulating artwork.
- Artwork must depict a living species native to Florida in its natural habitat. This includes land animals, birds and freshwater and saltwater fish found in Florida waters.
- Artwork may depict more than a single species.
- Artwork featuring nonnative species will be disqualified.
- No scrollwork, lettering or accent border may appear on the design. The artwork may be signed by the artist.
- Artwork format may be vertical or horizontal.
- Artwork may be in any 2D format – acrylic, watercolor, oil, pastels, etc.
- All entries must have been completed during the years 2003-2008.
- Artwork previously submitted to, or published in, *Florida Wildlife* is not eligible.
- Employees of the FWC and their immediate families are not eligible.
- Any entry which fails to comply with any of the requirements of these rules shall be disqualified.

## Judging

- Entries will be judged by employees of the FWC. Judges' decisions are final.
- Entries will be judged on anatomical accuracy, artistic composition, originality and suitability for reproduction. Color is preferred.

**Mail entries to:**
Florida Wildlife Art Contest
620 South Meridian Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600

## Agreement for publication

- By entering the contest, participants agree the winning works of art will be published in the July/August issue of *Florida Wildlife* and on the magazine's Web site.
- The first place award-winning artist will receive $500. *Florida Wildlife* will be entitled to print and distribute up to 1,000 limited-edition, numbered and signed prints of the winning entry to be marketed through *Florida Wildlife* and the Wildlife Foundation of Florida, with proceeds going to the Foundation. The winning artist will personally sign and number each print and may keep 25 prints. *Florida Wildlife* and the winning artist will agree to specific delivery terms. The artist will supply a 4" x 5" or larger transparency or high-resolution scan for print production.
- The second place winner will receive $200.
- The third place winner will receive $100.
- Awards of Merit may or may not be awarded. If awarded, winners will receive $50.

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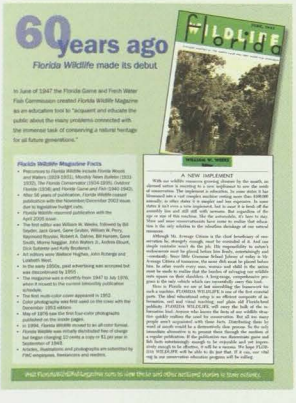



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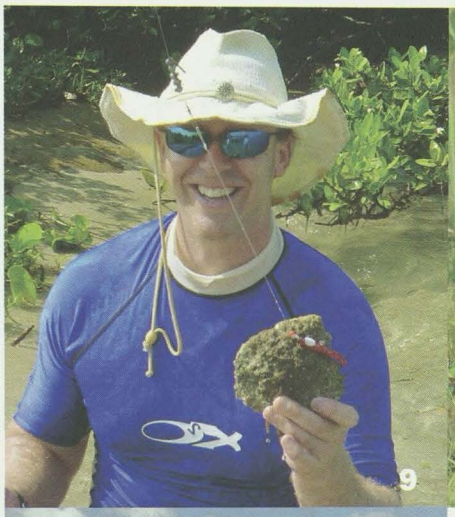
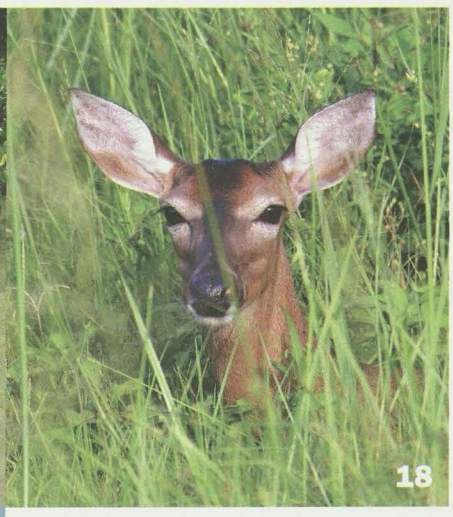
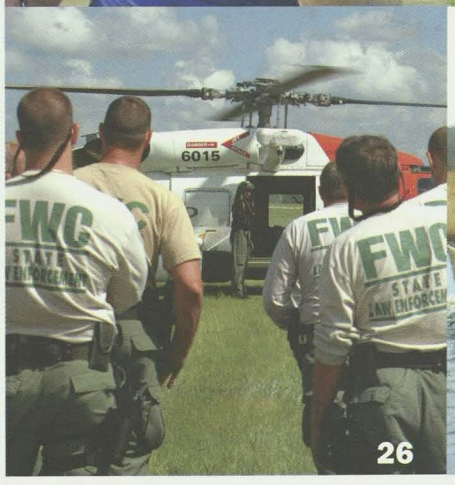
*By Jason Hahn*
*www.jasonhahn.com*




DOROTHY L. HARRIS




BETSY S. FRANZ




TIM DONOVAN

LAZARO ALEMAN

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Volume 60

# FLORIDA Wildlife

Issue 6

CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE OF HUNTING, FISHING AND NATURE-BASED RECREATION

**Published by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**

Our mission: Managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people



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# Catch The New 2008 BASS Calendar.

Anything we can do to save our bass is important, that's why we are working with the Wildlife Foundation of Florida to sell this truly unique calendar. It celebrates the Florida largemouth bass with breathtaking photography by internationally renowned photographer Glen Lau. All profits from the calendar will support the efforts of the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission's new Florida Bass Conservation Center (FBCC).

You can get this beautiful 2008 calendar, which makes a great gift for anglers, and make a contribution that will help keep bass fishing alive and well in Florida at the same time. The cost of the calendar is $12.95 plus postage. What a deal! Please join BASS in working with the Foundation to make this calendar a success.

**To order call 800-988-4889 or visit www.WildlifeFoundationofFlorida.com.**

Glen Lau

WILDLIFE FOUNDATION OF FLORIDA

ESTABLISHED | 1994

*Florida is like no other place on earth. Working together, we can keep it that way.*

# Tracking the evolution of conservation in Florida

Kenneth D. Haddad

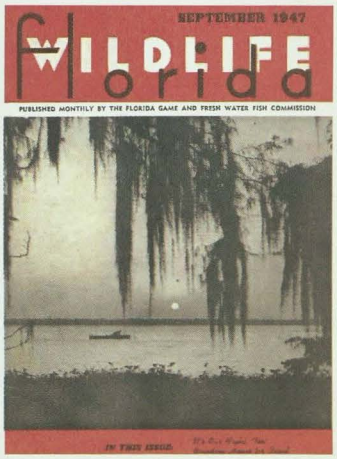
*Executive Director*
*Florida Fish*
*and Wildlife*
*Conservation*
*Commission*

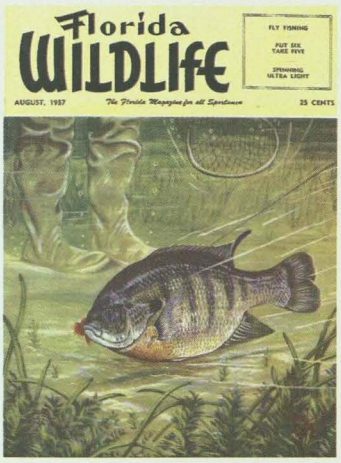
This issue of *Florida Wildlife* magazine celebrates the 60 years since its beginning. Since 1947, this magazine has tracked the evolution of fish and wildlife conservation in Florida.

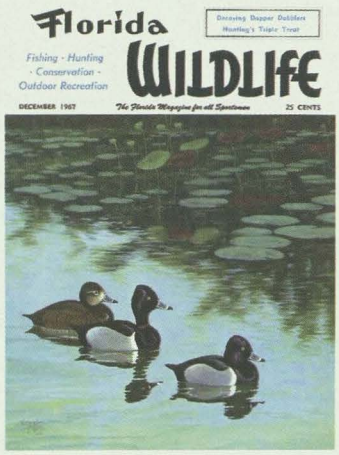
Until the 1930s, conservation efforts had little to do with science. Most bag limits and other hunting and fishing regulations materialized out of traditions. But then, people began to grasp the concept that fish and wildlife were not inexhaustible. People realized it was within their power to use up the resource completely and lose it forever if they didn't restrict harvests. They looked to scientists for guidance.

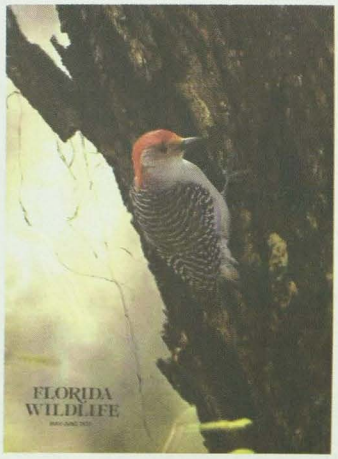
In 1943, despite the distraction of the global war that raged at that time, the people of Florida were so concerned about the future of fish and wildlife they approved an amendment to the state constitution to create a new agency to be nature's steward.

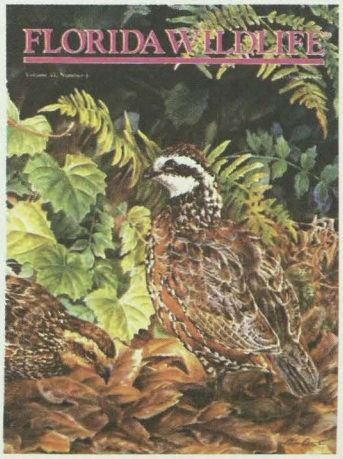
The focus for many years was game animals, but eventually, Floridians realized much more was at stake. The lizards, frogs, toads and other critters – even insects and the others we see every day – are all part of a magnificent system in which all species depend on each other. As a result, science grew more important to conservation, and conservation science had to broaden its scope. Even the oceans that cover more than two-thirds of the world couldn't replace species as quickly as people could use them.

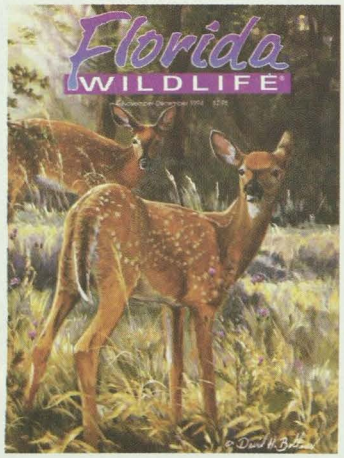



Conservation today is much more complex than anyone could have dreamed when *Florida Wildlife* first rolled off the press six decades ago. We at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission believe this magazine plays a significant role in keeping Floridians informed about the challenges individuals must take on to ensure a better future for the natural wonders past generations have handed down to us for our care. FW

# It matters to us which plate you buy

National Geographic

Purchase a panther license plate to help protect the unique Florida panther. Proceeds pay for research, management and law enforcement. Or, choose one of the plates above. It's as easy as 1-2-3 at the tax collector's office or you can order online at BUYaPLATE.com. Either way, you'll be providing much needed support for conservation. It matters to us.

**Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**
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# In Box

**Giving credit where it is due**

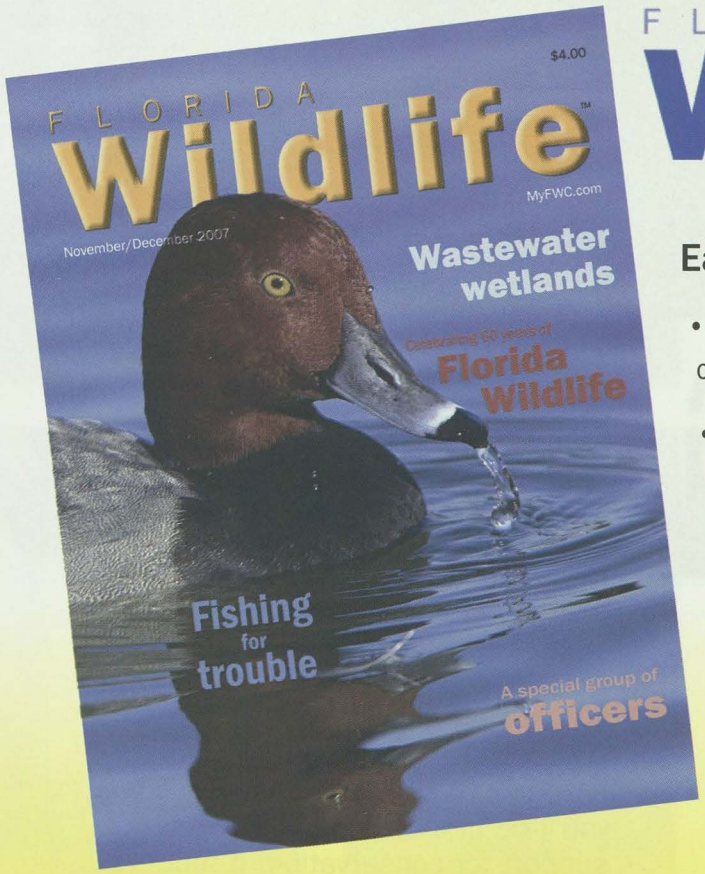
The future of fishing and the survival of our marine resources squarely rest in our children's hands. A couple of years back, some of us old salts including Gary Anderson, Capt. Mike Zgrabik and Mike Cavallo, banded together to form a group, which fished and became protectors of our environment. Age was not a factor, but the love to fish was. Through this common thread, The Island Anglers was born. We started as a fishing club with a Web site to display trophies caught by children and have evolved into a conservation marine network whose role is to deliver a message of "Positive Mentoring through Fishing."

The Island Anglers focuses on young people, and casts awareness on Florida fisheries and aquatic habitats. Our Web site, www.theislandanglers.com is but another tool in the quest to ensure the survival of our future fish stocks. We strive to teach people, especially children, about fishing, freshwater, saltwater and marine habitats, through aquatic resource stewardship.

Through volunteerism, greatness is born and through the valiant efforts of the City of Venice, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Venice City Police Department, Sharky's on the Pier and a slew of individuals, the Cast A Special Thrill Third Florida Fishing Event for Kids became a reality.

A special "thank you" goes to the outstanding performance of FWC Law Enforcement Officer Michael Rodgers. He helped make that day special, with smiles from all. Officer Rodgers visits the city pier on a regular basis and is most concerned with the preservation of angling. He lends a hand to all in need, gives out pertinent advice, explains the rules and is an asset to all. Michael goes beyond what is called for in his job description and for this should be highly commended.

*Respectively Yours,*
*Gary Anderson, Capt. Mike Zgrabik and Mike Cavallo*


FLORIDA
Wildlife

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- Articles and tips for hunters, anglers and other outdoors enthusiasts
- Breathtaking nature photography and wildlife art
- Profiles of Florida's wild places and creatures
- Fish and wildlife resource management

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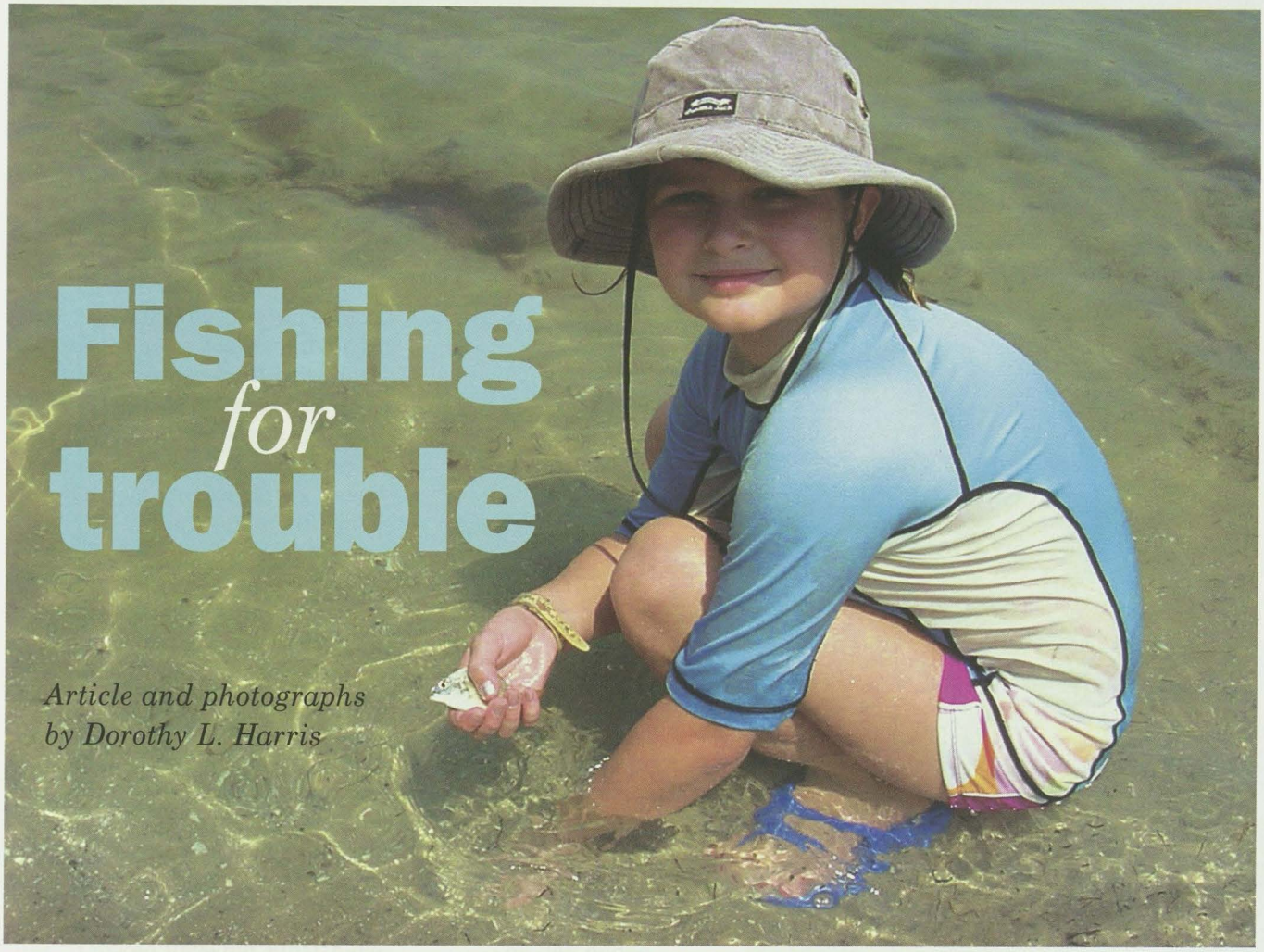


# Fishing *for* trouble

*Article and photographs by Dorothy L. Harris*

## It all started with a visit to my childhood home

We wanted to show our daughter the outdoor places we had loved in our youth. Near my home was a man-made lake where my dad fished, mom relaxed near the shore, and we kids played among the tadpoles. My daughter enjoyed visiting the lake and was intrigued by the stories of our long-ago fishing forays.

Fishing fever began with a trip to see my husband's parents. Grandpop has 23 acres and a stocked pond. If I said by the end of the day that our daughter was hooked, I wouldn't be exaggerating. No sooner did a worm hit the water than a fish took the bait. She and the other grandkids reeled in fish after fish, perhaps the same ones over and over, all day long.

It shouldn't have surprised me when a pair of long-unused, dusty poles from my parents' garage found their way into our luggage. On the flight home, we talked about our upcoming trip to the Atlantic Coast, to what some call the premier saltwater fishing location in Florida.

I wondered aloud whether those ancient, low-cost poles could withstand a saltwater excursion. With little fishing knowledge but a rather good memory, I recalled the anglers we had seen with rolling caddies of live bait, aerated tanks and big, impressive fishing poles.

*We practiced catch and release, and I'm not sure which part was the most fun for our daughter – the catching or the releasing.*

**Sure enough, he came home with a shopping bag full of fishing supplies.**

*Learning the ropes, or should I say "reels" is an important part of fishing. Good thing they have recycle receptacles for monofilament line. We definitely needed them!*

Perhaps size really matters?

My husband assured me our poles would be fine for catching those big, shiny ocean fish we had marveled about. Secretly, I couldn't help but wonder if this was just a ploy to get me browsing rod and reel Web sites and magazines full of budget-depleting fishing necessities.

Sure enough, the next day he came home with a shopping bag full of fishing supplies, including colorful, shiny rubber creatures that delighted my daughter. As they combed through manmade creations resembling no sea creature I'd ever seen, they assured me these would catch something wonderful. Neither seemed concerned when I reminded them of the anglers we had seen on the jetty and how none had been fishing with rubber lizards.

"These aren't lizards," insisted my husband, "and it says right here on the package 'suitable for salt water.'"

I decided to go along with their much-anticipated fishing excursion. At least I would enjoy the view, and maybe they really would catch something.

As we packed, I asked how we would handle cutting the line if we caught a shark or stingray, which we had seen happen.

"No problem," my husband replied, putting my father's 30-year-old pocket knife into a fancy new tackle box. I was tempted to ask if the knife even had an edge, but held my tongue.

Reading up on fishing regulations, licensing and helpful hints, I mentioned I had seen something about circle hooks and how much better they were for catch-and-release fishing.

"I've already got hooks," my husband replied, showing me an array of metal neatly lined up.

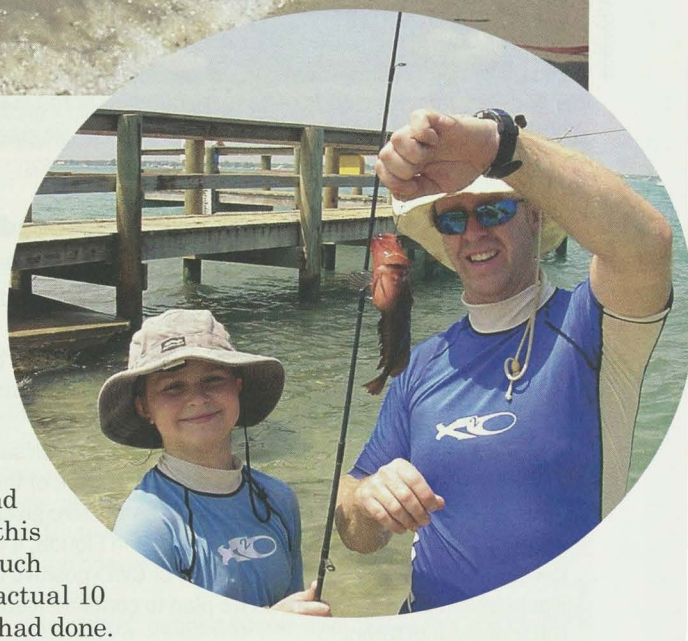
I prayed the practice casting sessions would dramatically improve prior to our actual excursion, as I envisioned removing a hook from tender flesh with Dad's rusty old knife. Who knows what sort of microbe might infect my loved ones? I decided to be prepared and began reviewing my medical policy then and there.

The big day arrived. The weather was perfect, the breeze delightful and the anglers scant. My hopes of helpful hints evaporated as quickly as moisture formed on my husband's tanned brow. Squinting, he began baiting hooks with chartreuse and magenta sea lizards. My daughter picked a Day-Glo green and nearly took off my eyebrow with her first cast.

After a few pointers from Dad, she tried again, basically dropping the line into the swirling depths. We all leaned over and waited. We waited a bit more. Seeing that we weren't going to catch a huge fish right away, my husband impaled "pinky" on his hook and dropped it into the depths as well. As our candy-colored lizards danced in the blue-green water, we looked around at our few fellow fisher folks. Most had bait tanks, those really big rods and nets. We, on the other hand, had our pretty rubber sea lizards, a really big tackle box and a very impatient 10-year-old.

"My sea lizard isn't working," demanded my daughter.

"They aren't lizards," tersely replied my husband, glancing over at me as I hid my laughter. Then he patiently tried to explain the difference between



***Above:*** *Daddy's getting a bite, finally!* ***Right:*** *Here they are posing with my daughter's first saltwater fish. It may have only been a rockfish, but it's a memory that will last forever!*

Grandpop's stocked pond and the big, blue ocean.

We all glanced down into the water at our swirling wigglers. They didn't look appetizing.

"What kind of fish would eat that," I asked for what must have seemed like one time too many.

"I'm sorry," I said when I saw my husband scowl.

"It's not you," he replied.

"Uh, oh," I said, looking behind me.

Together, we ran to the other side of the jetty. Down below us a small child had climbed through heavy metal railings and was now stuck fast. As my husband took off in that direction, my daughter and I gathered our meager gear and climbed down the steps along with a growing crowd.

The child couldn't pull his head back through the thick, metal guardrails and was solidly stuck. As my husband and several other men assisted two police officers, I couldn't help but see the irony. We had planned to go fishing, but I assumed it would be for ocean creatures, not an adventurous child.

The day ended well, with the child being safely removed and my daughter declaring this adventure was much, much more exciting than the actual 10 minutes of fishing they had done.

Once we got home, I figured this had pretty much served as our family's fishing adventure, and we could now move onto something else. Glancing through the shopping bags piled on my counter the next day, the truth began to dawn on me. A huge, golden, quick-spinning, reel-like thing gleamed at me from the bottom of a plastic bag.

"What is that thing?" I asked.

"This," replied my husband, "is for that old rod. I think I can fix it up so we can actually catch a fish next time."

Did he say next time? It looks like I'm not out of the water yet! FW

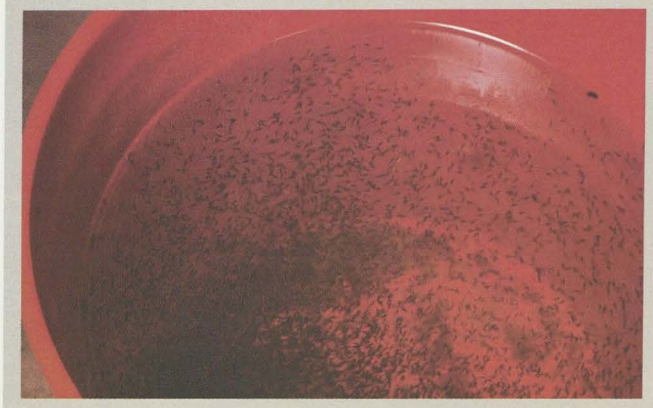
---

*Dorothy Harris may not know much about fishing, but she's looking forward to exploring this part of the Florida environment after seeing the vast array of sea life just under the foamy water's surface. Most often, you'll find her identifying insects, spotting birds, or just sharing her love of the Florida outdoors with anyone who'll listen. She and her family enjoy camping, canoeing, bird watching and simply being outside.*

**Did he say next time? It looks like I'm not out of the water yet!**

# News & **Notes**

## How many fish does the FWC produce?



TIM DONOVAN

*A bucket holds thousands of bass fry hatched at the state-of-the-art Florida Bass Conservation Center.*

The Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management had a prolific year, producing an estimated 1.24 million fish in 2006-07. That's enough to give one fish to every resident of Hillsborough County – with plenty left for both Daytona Beach and Lake City.

The Division operates two fish-production facilities: Blackwater Fish Hatchery in Santa Rosa County and the state-of-the-art Florida Bass Conservation Center in Sumter County. Freshwater species coming from their ponds, tanks and raceways include largemouth bass, striped bass, striped bass hybrids (sunshine bass and palmetto bass), white bass, channel catfish, bluegill and redear sunfish, and triploid grass carp.

But rather than dole them out in the scenario described above, staff wisely stocked the fish at 106 sites in 41 Florida counties and provided them to cooperators in Alabama and at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the University of Florida and Bass Pro Shops.

## Chronic wasting disease not detected in Florida's deer herd

After extensive testing, the FWC has not found any evidence of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in the state's white-tailed deer population.

The FWC tested 636 free-ranging deer during the past year and more than 3,000 deer during the past five years, with no CWD-positive results.

FWC's wildlife veterinarian Dr. Mark Cunningham said, "While we can never say that Florida is entirely free of the disease without testing every deer, this sample size gives us very high confidence that if CWD is present in Florida, it is at low levels. However, even low numbers of CWD-positive deer would be cause for concern, so we plan to continue testing for the foreseeable future."

CWD is a contagious neurological disease that has been found in captive and wild herds of mule deer, white-tailed deer and Rocky Mountain elk within several Midwestern and Western states. The disease causes degeneration of the brains of infected animals, resulting in emaciation, abnormal behavior, loss of bodily functions and death.

Thus far, no Southeastern states, including Florida, have been hit by the deer disease.

To reduce the chances of CWD turning up in Florida, the state prohibits importing carcasses of any species of deer, elk or moose from 14 states and two Canadian provinces where CWD has been detected.

States and provinces currently with CWD include New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Illinois, New York, West Virginia, and Alberta and Saskatchewan, Canada. Visit the United States Department of Agriculture's Web site at www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/cwd/ for the most up-to-date CWD reporting.

"Early detection is the key to limiting the spread of the disease, if such an outbreak should occur in Florida," said Dr. Robert Vanderhoof, leader of the Deer Management Section of the FWC's Division of Hunting and Game Management.

Once again, this hunting season the FWC is turning to hunters and members of the public for assistance in helping monitor the state's deer herd for CWD.

"We're asking hunters to report any sightings of sickly or scrawny-looking deer or deer dead of unknown causes," Vanderhoof said. "If you see such a deer, call toll-free 1-866-CWD-WATCH (293-9282). Please do not handle the deer. Wildlife biologists will respond, and if necessary, collect deer tissue for testing. It's important to contact us as soon as possible, because such testing must take place within 48 hours of a deer's death to yield reliable results."

CWD WATCH is part of an aggressive monitoring program to ensure CWD is not already in Florida, and the disease does not spread into this state.

There is no evidence that CWD poses a risk for humans, however, public health officials recommend avoiding direct contact with any sick-looking deer or one that has died from unknown causes.

More information about CWD is available at MyFWC.com/cwd. The Web site also offers links to wildlife and health agencies with more in-depth information about the disease.

## Camp Blanding WMA now has "hunter hotline"

Hunters who are interested in the opportunities available on Camp Blanding Wildlife Management Area can call a new hunting hotline to get up-to-date information about the area.

The hotline, (904) 291-9912, is up and running, said Scott Johns, district wildlife biologist at the FWC Olustee Field Office.

"This is something we developed at the request of the military folks at Camp Blanding. They kept getting calls about the hunts but didn't have the information to keep up with the hunt dates, closures, re-openings, license, stamp, permit requirements and such," Johns said.

Hunting this area can be confusing, because of the variety of hunts and military training requirements. The wildlife management area consists of 56,197 acres in Clay County.

"This hotline gives us the ability to provide hunters with up-to-the-minute changes in hunting opportunities. For example, we can let hunters know when an area has been closed for training by the military and when hunts are cancelled," Johns said.

For instance, on Still Hunt Area 2, archery and muzzleloading gun hunts have been canceled because of military training. These hunts will be conducted on Still Hunt Area 1 only.

"We also can let hunters know when the areas are opened again if the training is completed early or other changes are made. Jim Garrison, our biologist at Camp Blanding, is responsible for the hotline and will update it as necessary," Johns said. "I hope folks will take advantage of this service. It should prevent misunderstandings and misinformation that have occurred in the past and will provide better customer service to our Camp Blanding hunters."

For hunting information, visit MyFWC.com/hunting or call the regional office, (386) 758-0525, for a brochure.

FWC FILES

*Kolby Aton proudly holds a deer harvested during last year's supervised youth hunt at Camp Blanding WMA.*

## FWC, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department sign antivenin pact

TIM DONOVAN

*FWC aircraft will transport antivenin, provided by the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department, to hospitals throughout the state for snakebite victims.*

The FWC and the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department have teamed up to save the lives of snakebite victims. Gov. Charlie Crist made the announcement Sept. 14.

"This partnership will save the lives of people who have been bitten by venomous creatures," Governor Crist said. "It is an excellent example of government pooling their resources to better serve the people of Florida."

The two agencies signed a memorandum of agreement that will make the FWC's 12 aircraft available for emergency transportation of antivenin within Florida. Miami-Dade has the world's largest inventory of antivenin and is the only fire department-based antivenin bank in the United States.

The project, dubbed Venom 1, provides that the FWC will provide its aircraft as one of several agencies taking part in the program, subject to aircraft availability. The agreement does not cover flights outside Florida.

"Rapid response saves lives when a venomous snake bites somebody," said FWC Chairman Rodney Barreto. "Sometimes there is very little time to treat the victim. The FWC has the resources to help ensure victims' survival, and this agency is pleased to make them available."

According to "The Florida Handbook," published by the Florida Department of State, roughly 300 venomous snakebites occur annually in Florida. Fatalities are rare in the United States and other countries where prompt medical attention is available.

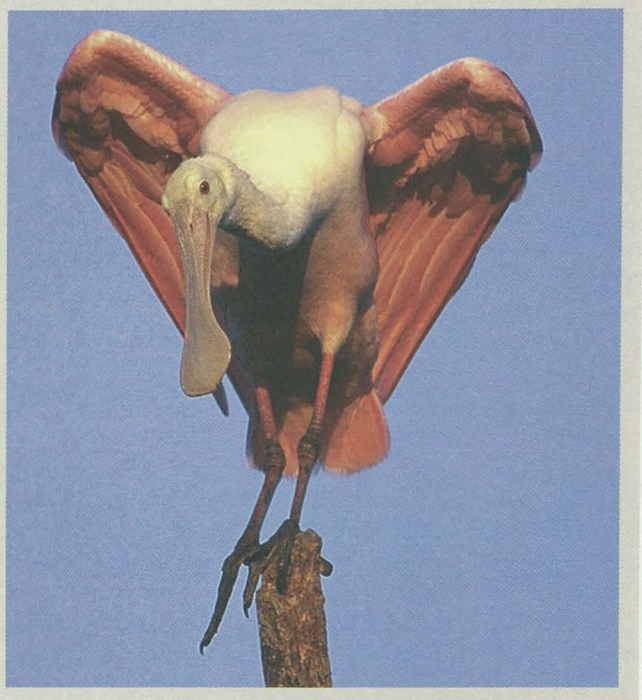
Al Cruz of the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department said coral snake antivenin will no longer be in production in the United States as of December 2008.

"That means every hospital in Florida will depend on us for the antivenin," he said.

Cruz said 75-80 percent of coral snake bites in the United States occur in Florida.

# News & **Notes**

## Roseate spoonbill named St. Augustine's official bird



JACK ROGERS

Aside from being the only species of spoonbill in the Western Hemisphere, and from receiving such accolades as "beautiful" and "graceful" by none other than John James Audubon in the early 19th century, the roseate spoonbill has received another tribute, this one from the St. Augustine City Commission when that body named the bird as the city's official bird.

In a unanimous vote at its meeting on Mon., Aug. 27, the Commission agreed that the stunning and unique bird, which is often seen in the estuarial waters of the San Sebastian and Matanzas Rivers, was worthy of being named as the first ever official city bird for the Nation's Oldest City.

The plume trade of the late 19th century nearly decimated the roseate spoonbill as hunters destroyed the birds by the thousands to provide its pink feathers for the manufacture of fans and women's hats. By the 1930's there were a mere 15 breeding pairs identified in the state of Florida, but today those numbers are estimated to exceed 1,000. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission currently lists the bird as a Species of Special Concern, with its biggest threat being diminishing habitats.

In naming the bird as the city's official bird, the Commission stated that its action was "...in recognition of its shared characteristics with the Nation's Oldest City: its exceptional beauty, its rich history and its uncommon ability to survive in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds."

## K-9 Sadie to the rescue

A 57-year-old Okaloosa County man who became disoriented and lost the afternoon of Sept. 4 in a dense, swampy area of the Blackwater River State Forest was rescued by Sadie, a black lab and recent FWC K-9 graduate.

Officers said Neal Midenderg, in the Beaver Creek community, left his home on foot around 1 p.m. to search for one of his dogs. When Midenderg failed to return after an hour, his wife flagged down FWC officer Alan Kerchinger.

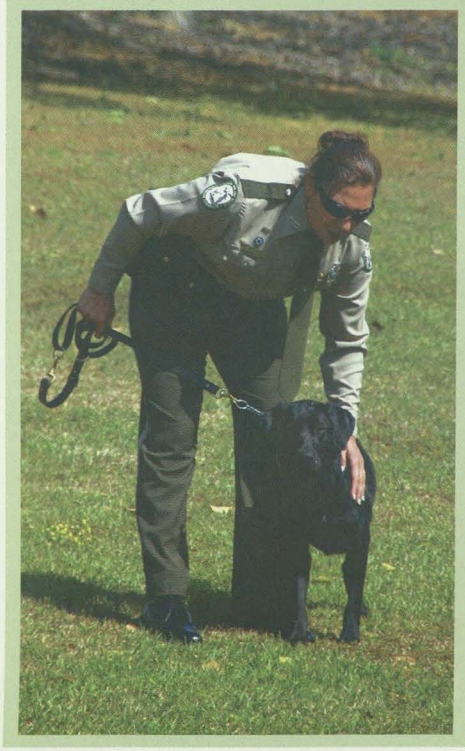
Kerchinger and fellow officers Danny Arnette and Ken White and a Florida Division of Forestry employee began a search and located the missing dog, but not Midenderg.

Kerchinger found a single set of footprints in a dim road one-half mile or so from the home and knew exactly what to do: call out Officer Sarah Hahner and K-9 Sadie. Sadie and Hahner graduated in April after 12 weeks of intensive training in human tracking and wildlife and evidence detection.

Hahner, who lives in Pensacola, was off duty Tuesday but knew Sadie could help. She and Sadie arrived around 3:30 p.m. Sadie led the searchers over a one-half mile route to a thick creek bottom and Midenderg.

"Boy was I glad to see those guys," said Midenderg, who moved to the area in 2002 from New York. "I knew I was lost, so I sat down by this tree and a brook. The thing I kept thinking about was I didn't want to spend the night in the woods.

"My mistake was not leaving a trail so I could get back out. I was so annoyed with myself, but those guys were terrific; they were so professional."



TIM DONOVAN

Although scratched, hot and bug-bitten, Midenderg was OK and returned home.

For Officer Hahner, the successful search shows the value of K-9s like Sadie.

*Officer Sarah Hahner and K-9 Sadie are one of six canine teams that completed training this spring. All six dogs were handpicked by the FWC from donors.*

## New Florida hunting and fishing license fees in effect

As of Oct. 1, a new fee schedule is in effect for all recreational licenses issued by the FWC.

During its 2007 session, the Florida Legislature passed a bill to increase the fees for all recreational saltwater and freshwater fishing and hunting licenses. Hunting license fees were last increased in 1979 and fishing license fees in 1989.

Bob Wattendorf, who heads up marketing in the FWC's Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management, said, "When fees for fishing licenses were last increased, in 1989, gasoline cost 89 cents a gallon. But even with the new fee increases, the cost of hunting and fishing in Florida falls below the median costs for the other 49 states. Also the percentage of increase is well below the rise in the cost of living seen since 1989."

All the fees from these licenses go back into conserving fish and wildlife resources and benefit anglers and hunters.

The increased revenue, expected to total $10 million annually within four years, will not create new programs, but will offset a predicted $12.5-million deficit by 2010, said Sandra Wilson, director of finance and budget at FWC. In addition to issuing the licenses, FWC is charged with directly conserving fish and wildlife resources, and it creates and enforces rules and regulations regarding hunting and fishing in the state as well as promoting boating safety and access.

Florida remains the No. 1 fishing destination in the United States, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2006 national survey. In addition, Florida ranks No. 1 in the nation for its $11 billion generated annually through hunting, fishing and wildlife-viewing activities throughout the state.

**Recreational hunting and fishing license fees**
**Old and new costs (effective October 1, 2007)**

| Florida residents type of license | Old fee | New fee |
|---|---|---|
| Annual freshwater fishing | $13.50 | $17.00 |
| Annual saltwater fishing | $13.50 | $17.00 |
| Annual hunting | $12.50 | $17.00 |
| Annual combos: | | |
| Hunting, freshwater fishing | $23.50 | $32.50 |
| Fresh/saltwater fishing | $25.50 | $32.50 |
| Hunting, fresh/saltwater fishing | $35.50 | $48.00 |
| Annual sportsman's | $72.50 | $80.50 |
| Annual gold sportsman's | $88.50 | $100.00 |
| 5-year freshwater fishing | $61.50 | $79.00 |
| 5-year saltwater fishing | $61.50 | $79.00 |
| 5-year hunting | $56.50 | $79.00 |
| **Nonresidents type of license** | **Old fee** | **New fee** |
| 3-day freshwater fishing | N/A | $17.00 |
| 7-day freshwater fishing | $16.50 | $30.00 |
| 3-day saltwater fishing | $6.50 | $17.00 |
| 7-day saltwater fishing | $16.50 | $30.00 |
| Annual freshwater fishing | $31.50 | $47.00 |
| Annual saltwater fishing | $31.50 | $47.00 |

The FWC presented its findings to the Legislature earlier this year. The projected deficit would leave revenue streams for marine fisheries, freshwater fisheries and hunting in jeopardy. In addition, programs already in place, such as those for panthers, manatees and other imperiled species, would need funding to keep pace with increased costs.

However, the new fees were kept to the minimum necessary to offset the projected deficit, rather than at a level that would maximize revenue. Compared to the cost of movies, golf, bowling and other forms of recreation, fishing and hunting fees remain very affordable, especially when viewed as an unlimited, year-round privilege, Wattendorf said.

"It will allow our habitat restoration, fish stocking, law enforcement and outreach programs to continue without cuts," Wattendorf said. "We can't guarantee that some things won't be trimmed in the future, but the expectation is the license fee increases will prevent us from going backwards."

Recreational licenses may be purchased online at MyFWC.com, or by calling 1-888-FISH FLORIDA (347-4356) or 1-888-HUNT FLORIDA (486-8356), or from numerous sporting goods retailers and at tax collectors' offices. If licenses are not purchased at tax collectors' offices, additional processing fees will be applied.

*Compared to the cost of movies, golf, bowling and other forms of recreation, fishing and hunting fees remain very affordable.*

# News & **Notes**

## Boat theft is a fast-growing trend

The FWC's Division of Law Enforcement urges boat owners to protect their boats from theft and to avoid boat title fraud schemes.

More than 1,200 boats have been reported stolen in Florida this year. That reflects a 30-percent increase compared to the same period last year. Also, the FWC said there is a growing trend in theft of "go-fast" type boats.

"Go-fast boats, 26-39 feet long, are being targeted with greater frequency than in previous years," said Lt. John Humphreys of FWC's Investigations Section. "These boats are targeted by criminals because of their high-dollar value and for use in maritime-based smuggling activities."

Dade, Monroe and Broward counties have the highest number of boat thefts; however, thefts have been reported from every county in the state.

"Boat theft is big business and a growing trend in Florida," said Capt. David Bullard of FWC's Investigations Section. "Frequently, boat thefts are linked to larger issues, such as organized crime, illegal immigration and domestic security threats. Because of this, it's essential to work with federal and local law enforcement agencies to combat the problem."

"Protecting Florida's boaters and waterways is vital to FWC's mission," said FWC Commission Chairman Rodney Barreto. "It's critically important that Florida's vast boating community take precautions to avoid becoming victims of these crimes."

Contact your local sheriff's office or police department to report a stolen boat or suspected boat title fraud.

Additional information and tips for avoiding boat theft and boat title fraud can be found at MyFWC.com/Law and at the Florida Marine Intelligence Unit's Web site, www.FMIU.org.

## Repaired and new signs will mark manatee protection zones in Collier County

The FWC began work in September to remove, repair, clean and install waterway signs posting state-adopted manatee protection zones in Collier County. Workers expect to finish the job by the end of the year.

The FWC is replacing signs damaged by hurricanes, deteriorated from age or in disrepair due to vandalism. In addition, the agency is relocating or posting new signs to mark the existing protection zones. Repairs will take place only on state-adopted manatee protection zone signs in Little Hickory Bay, Wiggins Bay, Water Turkey Bay, Naples Bay, Dollar Bay, Gordon Pass, Haldeman Creek, Henderson Creek, Hall Bay, Johnson Bay, Isle of Capri, Marco River, Addison Bay, McIlvane Bay, Goodland Bay, Blue Bay, Caxambas Pass, Port of the Islands, Faka Union Canal and Chokoloskee Bay.

"There are several areas around the county where officers were issuing warnings because the manatee signs were missing or damaged," said Lt. Mitts Mravic of FWC's Collier County office. "After this project is completed, officers will be issuing citations again for speeding in manatee zones."

TIM DONOVAN

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that collisions with watercraft are responsible for about 25 percent of all manatee deaths and about 80 percent of all human-caused mortality in manatees.

Boaters in Collier County will be responsible for knowing the zones and operating their vessels accordingly. Once zones are properly marked, law enforcement officers will strictly enforce speed zones as posted.

"We want to protect the manatees," Mravic said. "It's all about slowing down vessel traffic in areas where these animals frequent to avoid additional manatee fatalities."

For more information, visit MyFWC.com and click "Manatees" to access state manatee speed zone maps.

## Not all muzzleloaders are legal for muzzleloading gun season

The FWC wants to make it clear to all muzzleloader hunters – not all muzzleloaders are created equal. Some of the new models do not meet the legal definition of guns authorized for use during muzzleloading gun season.

The two issues which seem to be generating the most questions are whether muzzleloaders with an electronic ignition are legal and whether the use of nitro-cellulose powder is legal. Neither is legal for use in Florida during muzzleloading gun season.

"In particular, the CVA Electra is a new muzzleloader on the market that doesn't qualify as a state-defined muzzleloader," said Capt. John Miller of FWC's Division of Law Enforcement. "It is not a legal weapon for muzzleloader season because it uses an electronic ignition, fired by a battery."

The legal types of guns for use during the muzzleloading gun season use black powder or a non-nitro-cellulose substitute and are fired by wheel lock, flintlock or percussion cap ignition (including shotgun or 209 type primers). They are not adaptable to use of any self-contained cartridge ammunition.

The CVA Electra muzzleloader is legal to use during general gun season, however.

For more information on muzzleloader hunting, visit MyFWC.com/hunting.

## Twice as many citations issued during this year's sport lobster season

INDEX STOCK / ALAMY

*Spiny lobsters get their name from the forward-pointing spines that cover their bodies to help protect them from predators.*

During the two-day sport lobster season, officers logged 797 water patrol hours, conducted 2,205 vessel inspections, which resulted in 8,159 users checked, and received 154 calls for service. Enforcement activity resulted in 71 boating citations with 172 related warnings; 118 misdemeanor resource citations with 255 related warnings; and 14 other citation types as well as one boating-under-the-influence arrest. Three separate search-and-rescue (SAR) missions resulted in the rescue of eight people. One non-boating related fatality occurred after a diver suffered a heart attack. The number of incidents were dramatically different than the previous year's: Officers issued twice as many resource citations; 77 percent more boating safety warnings and received 64 percent more calls for service. There were 11 boating accidents and 17 SAR missions last year compared to only one boating accident and six SAR missions this year.

## Waterfowl and coot season opens Nov. 17

The FWC has officially set dates for the 2007-08 waterfowl and coot season, Canada goose season and youth waterfowl hunting days.

The first phase of waterfowl season is Nov. 17-25, with the second phase Dec. 8–Jan. 27. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

The daily bag limit for waterfowl is six. The six-duck limit may consist of no more than one black duck, one mottled duck (Florida duck), one fulvous whistling-duck, one pintail, two canvasbacks, two redheads, two wood ducks, two scaup, four scoters and four mallards (no more than two may be females).

The daily bag limit for coots is 15. For mergansers, the daily bag limit is five (only two of which may be hooded mergansers).

The daily bag limit for light geese (i.e., snow [including blue] geese and Ross's geese) is 15.

In Leon County and Lake Miccosukee in Leon and Jefferson counties, waterfowl hunting is allowed only on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays during the open season and on Nov. 22-23, Dec. 24, 25 and Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 and Jan. 21. Lake Talquin in Gadsden and Leon counties and the Ochlockonee River may be hunted every day during the open season.

On Lake Iamonia and Carr Lake in Leon County, the use of internal combustion engines is prohibited during the waterfowl and coot season. Additionally, on Lake Miccosukee in Leon and Jefferson counties, the use of internal combustion engines of more than five horsepower is prohibited.

The Canada goose season is Nov. 17-25, with the second phase Dec. 1 – Jan. 30. Canada geese may be taken only in Florida waters of Lake Seminole in Jackson County that are south of SR 2, north of the Jim Woodruff Dam and east of CR 271. The daily bag limit is five, and shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

THOMAS J. DUNKERTON

*The northern shoveler's distinct, spoon-shaped bill has about 110 projections (lamellae) along its edges, which filter food from the water.*

The FWC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have designated Feb. 2-3 as Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days. During this period, only children under 16 years old, supervised by an adult (18 years old or older) may hunt waterfowl, coots and common moorhens. Shooting hours, daily bag limits and species' restrictions are the same as for the regular waterfowl seasons.

Hunters taking migratory game birds in Florida are required to have a Migratory Game Bird Permit either checked or attached to their hunting license.

The FWC recommends hunters read the 2007-08 Florida Hunting Regulations Handbook and the Migratory Game Bird Regulations for Waterfowl and Coot Seasons brochure at MyFWC.com/hunting. These publications are available from county tax collectors' offices and licensed vendors.

# Wastewater wetlands

## A wetland by any name remains popular with wildlife

*Article and photographs by Betsy S. Franz*

Wetlands are nature's perfect water filters, providing biological, physical and chemical processes which help naturally "polish" wastewater.

Looking for someplace new to see the local wildlife? How about your local wastewater treatment plant?

Although it might not sound like the most scenic spot for wildlife viewing, some wastewater treatment plants around the state contain either natural or manmade wetlands that are a big draw to local wildlife and wildlife viewers. In addition to the natural scenery of plants, wildlife and wide-open water views, some of these sites have the added benefits of boardwalks, roadways and restrooms that provide a level of comfort not available in more remote wetland excursions.

Billions of gallons of wastewater are produced in Florida every day and must be treated so they do not adversely affect the environment. Wetlands, on the other hand, are nature's perfect water filters, providing biological, physical and chemical processes which help naturally "polish" this wastewater.

On March 1, 1979, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) formally recognized the potential of wetlands as a means of providing wastewater treatment. Since that time, specific regulations and standards have been put in place, helping create wastewater treatment facilities which also create safe habitat for Florida's diverse wildlife. And although the term "wastewater wetland" might not sound appealing, to the hundreds of rare and unusual birds that visit them annually, a wetland by any other name is just as inviting.

"Florida now has 32 domestic wastewater wetland sites," explained Shanin Speas-Frost, Wastewater to Wetlands coordinator for the DEP. "Although many of our wastewater to wetland facilities have restricted or no public access to their wetlands, we do have a few that welcome visitors and bird watchers, in particular."

Birds are so abundant at some of these wastewater wetland sites, they are listed as favorite birding sites on the Great Florida Birding Trail, a collection of 445 sites throughout Florida selected for their excellent birdwatching or bird education opportunities.

## Viera Wetlands, Brevard County

A recent visit to Viera Wetlands in Brevard County made me realize why these sites are favorites for wildlife watchers and photographers. Consisting of 200 acres, divided by berms into four cells of approximately 35 acres each plus a central lake, Viera Wetlands has well-maintained roadways providing excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing from the comfort of your vehicle. The area is wide-open with plenty of perches for posing birds.

During my first trip to the wetlands, I was treated to a group of sandhill cranes traipsing through a field of native wildflowers. Farther along the roadway, I was able to get photos of a great blue heron in another patch of flowers. I have visited

***Above:*** *The great blue heron is a permanent resident of wetlands throughout Florida.* ***Below:*** *White-tailed deer fawns are often left alone while their mother forages.* ***Facing page:*** *Sandhill cranes nest in wetlands associated with freshwater ponds and marshes.*

the wetlands several times since then and have been able to observe and photograph many bird species including American and least bitterns, white egrets, snowy egrets, glossy ibis and many others. The other forms of wildlife that I have seen in abundance are alligators and butterflies.

Other local birders have seen much rarer species on their visits to Viera Wetlands, including bald eagles, crested caracaras, purple gallinules, and recently, a masked duck, as well as deer,

otters and other mammals. The first U.S. sighting of a mangrove swallow was recorded at Viera Wetlands in November 2002.

Although you can view the many wonders of the wetlands from your car, to fully experience the area, you have to take the opportunity to listen! The sounds of birds and frogs calling and alligators splashing and grunting definitely let you experience the full ambiance of life in a Florida wetland.

Viera Wetlands is open to the public from sunrise to sunset, Monday-Sunday. For more information, call (321) 637-5521 or visit www.brevardcounty.us/environmental_management/VieraWetlands-Home.cfm.

After experiencing the wonders of this wastewater wetland, I can't wait to visit some of these others.

## Bayou Marcus Wetlands, Pensacola

This area contains a raised boardwalk which allows you to take a walk through a real Northwest Florida wetland without getting your feet muddy. In addition to the many birds spotted, including bald eagles, egrets, white ibis, falcons, pelicans, storks, black skimmers and nesting ospreys, at this wetlands the more observant visitors may be rewarded by a glimpse of white-tailed deer, turkeys, gray foxes, raccoons, rabbits, beavers, bobcats, turtles, otters, snakes and alligators.

Bayou Marcus Wetlands is open during daylight hours, 365 days a year. For more information, call (850) 458-1658 or visit www.dep.state.fl.us/Water/wastewater/dom/wetbayou.htm.

## Green Cay Wetlands and Nature Center, Boynton Beach

This 100-acre wetlands site emulates the Everglades ecosystem with a wide expanse of marsh habitat as well as tree islands and cypress hammocks. A 1.5-mile elevated boardwalk includes two loops that wind throughout the wetlands. Green Cay Wetlands is also home to a 9,000-square-foot nature center which features exhibits and hands-on experiences for the whole family.

The wetland boardwalk is open to the general public from sunrise to sunset, seven days a week. The nature center hours are Tuesday-Friday, 1 p.m.-4:30 p.m.; Saturday, 8:15 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; and Sunday, 1 p.m.-4:30 p.m. For more information, call (561) 966-7000 or visit: www.pbcgov.com/waterutilities/waterfacts/green_cay.htm.

## Wakodahatchee Wetlands, Palm Beach County

The 50-acre Wakodahatchee Wetlands attracts an abundant variety of wildlife, including turtles, frogs, otters, alligators and birds. The site was designed with a mixture of habitat types, which attract a variety of bird species. Open pond areas attract waterfowl and diving birds. Emergent marsh areas

attract rails, moorhens and sparrows. Shallow shelves are the preferred locale for herons and egrets. And shrubs, snags and forested wetlands provide roosting, nesting and long-term habitat for a variety of species. More than 140 different species of birds have been spotted at the site. A three-quarter mile boardwalk winds through three of the wetland's ponds.

The wetlands are open to the general public from sunrise to sunset, seven days a week. For more information, call (561) 493-6000 or visit www.pbcgov.com/waterutilities/wakodahatchee.

## Orlando Wetlands Park, Christmas

This 1,650-acre park includes hardwood hammocks, marshes and lakes as well as more than 20 miles of roads and woodland trails for hiking or biking the park. More than 2 million aquatic plants and 200,000 trees were planted to create this varied habitat, which is now home to more than 30 species of wildlife listed on the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Threatened and Endangered Wildlife list.

For more information about the park, call (407) 568-1706 or visit www.nbbd.com/godo/orlandowetlands/index.html.

## Blue Heron Wetlands Treatment Facility, Titusville

This 292-acre site, situated midway between the Indian River Lagoon and the St. Johns River, contains seven cells (one pond cell, three deep marsh cells and three shallow marsh cells), that are rich in wildlife. Vehicle traffic is limited to the wetland perimeter berms, but there are walking trails between the various cells. Deer, wild hogs, bobcats, alligators, birds, otters, turtles and frogs have been viewed from various locations throughout the facility. American bittern, purple gallinule, hairy woodpecker, limpkin, sandhill crane, roseate spoonbill, black-crowned night heron, black-necked stilt, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, bobolink and gull-billed tern are just a few of the more than 100 bird species sighted here.

The facility is open Monday-Friday, 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m., and weekends by appointment. For more information, call (321) 383-5642.

## Indian River County Wetlands Treatment Facility

This 135 acre site, consisting of 13 cells, or ponds, is home to alligators, otters, turtles and a wide range of migratory birds. A boardwalk system allows easy viewing of the species which include purple gallinules, king rails and yellowlegs.

The site is open Monday-Friday 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m. For more information, call (772) 770-5045.FW

***Above:*** *The green heron often forages from branches above the water.* ***Below:*** *Apple snails are the limpkin's primary food source though they also feed on other aquatic snails and bivalves.* ***Facing page:*** *Black-bellied whistling ducks are primarily nocturnal feeders.*

*The boat crashes through the waves like a wild horse through tall grass.*

## A cold and cloudless day is

# *the best time to sail to Anclote Key*

*By Henry Cordova ~ Illustrations by Fritz Seegers*

In fall and winter, after a cold front blows through the Gulf, the wind shifts northwest. The seas grow as high as they ever get here, except when there is a hurricane offshore. It's a long fetch from Texas to the Florida coast, and with 1,000 miles of deep water to cross and a constant wind behind them, big rollers build up. The drag of the sandy bottom on these big waves distorts and bends them but they stay together until, in a frenzy, they dash themselves against the beach. On days like this, when it is cold and a cloudless sky darkens to the most remarkable and unexpected blue, the sea shimmers pale-green as whitecaps stretch to the far horizon.

This is the best time to sail to the key, when wind and cold and chop drive the power boats off Anclote Anchorage. The weather, although stiff, will get milder over the next few days. My friend and I know this. After thunderstorms – marking a front's passage – rush away to the southeast, we are ready and have our boat packed; by early morning it is off the trailer and rigged, and we are underway.

The *Pelican* is small but designed precisely for this sort of adventure. On a typical mild day on the Gulf Coast she is slow and sluggish, but in conditions like this she is in her element. Just right for a crew of two, the lug-rigged cat sloop is perfect for the day: solid, dependable and with plenty of room to carry all the additional gear safety and prudence demands. Where we are going, there will not likely be anyone else, and we need to be self-sufficient.

Anclote Key is four miles offshore, an uphill slog all the way, directly to windward. To round the southern tip requires a series of alternating long and short tacks into the wind and chop. Glistening spray soon drenches the boat and its contents. The crew, in spite of the generous sun, is

warmly dressed, foulies over sweaters. Water falls everywhere, sloshing back and forth in the bilge and dripping off the sails and rigging.

The first leg of the trip takes several hours of hard beating to windward. A swift current in the Sound and the boat's flat bottom work against us; leeway pushes us south so we must tack often. My shipmate and I have done this for a long time, so scarcely a word is required between us. Our maneuvers are crisp and efficient, and the boat drives on like a locomotive, with sails full and lines taut, pounding into the chop.

On gentler days the shallow water is clear; plainly visible through it are great patches of turtle grass separated by stretches of white sand. In season, clouds of scallops scatter as the boat approaches, looking like comic, wind-up dentures bouncing through the transparent water. Sometimes porpoises follow the boat, often leaping alongside it, and stingrays scurry across the bottom. But not today. When the nor'wester blows, the sea floor is turbid, and the surface is a tangle of ripples and foam and whitecaps.

The boat crashes through the waves like a wild horse through tall grass. Spray leaps off the blunt bow and rains in sheets on and around us. As *Pelican* heels hard to leeward, we lean to weather; the helmsman looks forward and is soon drenched, but the man handling the jib stands facing aft, his back to the spray. Periodically, we change places. Conversation is possible, but soon we are hoarse from shouting over the wind. Our eyes move from the straining rig to the angle of the wind, invisible, but we can sense exactly where it is. If we keep the boat perfectly balanced, the voyage will be over much sooner. *Pelican* responds, a machine in harmony with her human cargo and the sea.

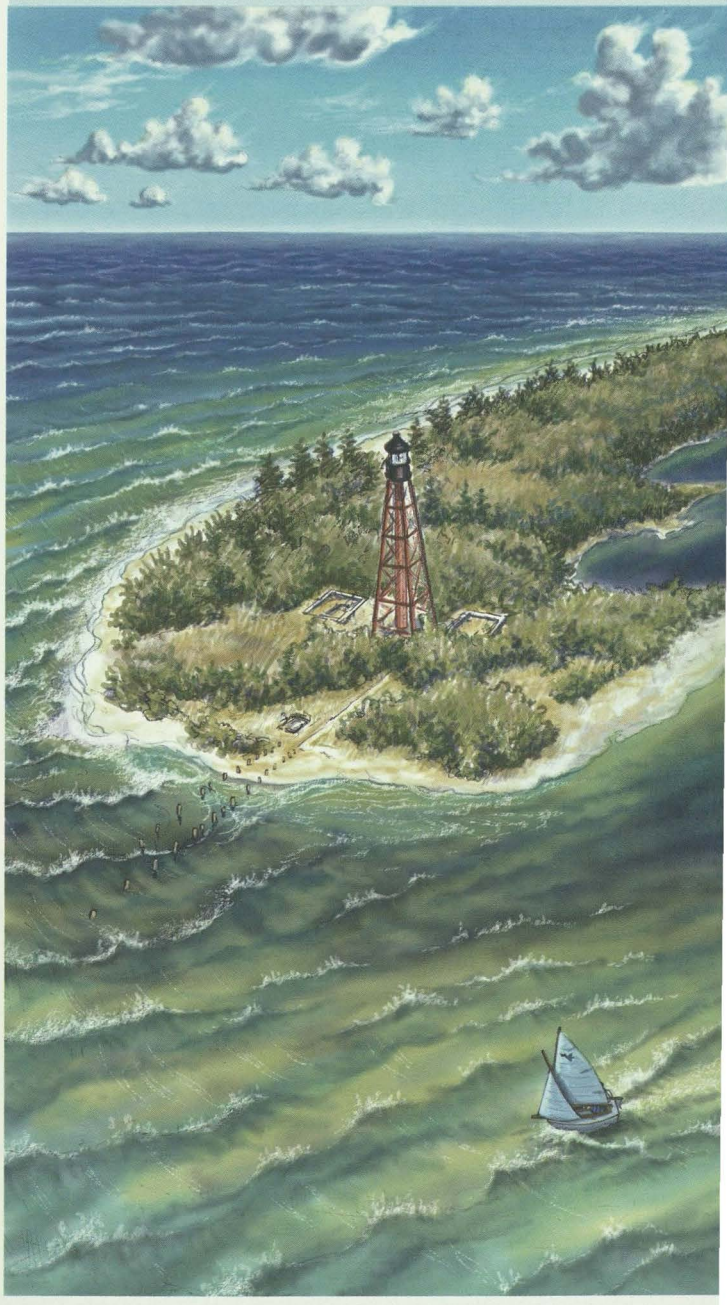
By lunchtime we reach the southern end of the island. We give it a wide berth. There is a tangle of shoals, channels and currents that on another day we might thread our way through. But not now, so we round the southern tip, gulp down a sandwich, a candy bar and a drink and turn across the wind and steer north, parallel to the long weather side of the island. We are cold and wet, but the sun is higher now, and the food warms us. Conditions are a little better. The waves are rollers, and the chop is not quite as bad. Soon, we remove our slickers.

We're on a port tack now and only come about when the leeway pushes us too close to shore – that turbulent cauldron of surf is no place for a small boat. It is ironic, this boat and crew are only in real danger if they get too close to land.

The trip along the length of the 3-mile-long island is the mirror image of the sail from the boat ramp. Now we have the wind to port, an invisible wall we slide against, as close as we dare get before it before it begins to slow us down. Our little boat, despite its deep, wide centerboard, loses ground to leeward towards the churning shore, and we periodically have to tack and beat out to deeper water before we can come about and resume our course parallel to the beach. During these short detours, we lose ground, traveling further from our destination.

The sail north lets us get a good look at Anclote Key, a long thin sandbar with a glorious sandy beach and a spine of palms and scrub down the middle. There is a mangrove swamp on the lee side, but we cannot see it. The sand sparkles white and featureless except for lines of weed and

*To round the southern tip of Anclote Key requires a series of alternating long and short tacks into the wind and chop.*



spindrift deposited by the falling tide. The surf beats mercilessly, but these days of heavy waves are infrequent. Tomorrow the outline of the coast will be visibly altered. The key is a living thing, and over a period of years we've seen it change and move along the surface of the sea. My friend and I have often remarked how fascinating a stop-action movie of the island might be – one frame taken every day over a century and then played back in a matter of minutes. The island would wriggle like an eel and swim down the Sound.

We pass familiar landmarks – the automated lighthouse and an old, wrecked, shrimp boat with only its pilot house visible above the sand. There is a new wreck too, a lovely yacht, her spine broken high up on the beach and her mast pointing to sea, parallel to the ground. The sand around her is littered with debris. A quick look through binoculars shows she has been there for some time; scavengers have stripped her expensive deck hardware. She was certainly a stranger to these waters, and in the dark, her skipper probably mistook the lights of a tall smokestack on the mainland for the lighthouse. The island is so low it can't be seen at night, and her crew probably sailed her right up on the beach.

It takes us hours to sail the length of the island. Boaters rarely visit the northern end; there are no ports to speak of and the mudflats and oyster bars are unfriendly to small craft. We find the deep channel between the end of the key and the sand flats and make our turn. The wind is behind us and sailing becomes a little easier. I kick up the centerboard to let us scoot through the shallows, leaving it down just far enough to warn us if we run into shoal water.

It feels as if the wind has suddenly dropped to a gentle breeze – actually we're just moving with it. My crewman stands on the foredeck with his trusty Polaroids and helps me pick our way through the shoals. The water is only a few feet deep, but since we're a small boat it presents no threat – we can always jump out and push. Offshore, big rollers crash into a long sandbar so we are protected. The hardest part of the trip is over. After clearing the tip of the island, we turn south. With the wind behind us, we glide parallel to land along a mangrove thicket that extends the length of the bay side.

The whole character of our world suddenly changes. The wind, blocked by land and a thick mangrove forest, dies down to the gentlest of breezes. The water is flat and serene, clear as glass, and the *Pelican* ghosts along in less than two feet of water. We strip off our wet clothes, change into dry ones, and have another snack.

*The shark dashes through the mullet, while the foot-long mullet scatter to confuse and avoid the assault.*

My friend lights up his pipe, relaxes and enjoys the view. The mangrove passing to starboard has a primeval, prehistoric look. The sun sinks low in the sky and hides behind the vegetation. *Pelican* silently drifts along in shadow, sails limp and barely pulling. Beneath the boat is a fine mud, almost quicksand, and the mangrove is as interlocked and tangled as the Devil's own basket; even a man with an axe could not hack his way through it. The wind is muted, but there's enough to keep saltwater marsh mosquitoes down. In a few days, a crop of wrigglers hatched after yesterday's rain will make this stretch of water a miserable place. We have our rods, as we'd planned to try for snook and snapper, but we are both too tired.

We slowly pass along the island and use this time to bail the bilge and secure loose gear cut adrift from the almost continuous pounding we had taken all day. We discuss cutting our cruise short and setting a course back to Tarpon Springs. We consult the chart and lay out a compass. It is almost night and most of our long trip back will be in the dark.

Out of nowhere, a school of mullet materializes between us and the shore. The fish are agitated and the school rushes about like a single panicked creature. We soon see why. A small shark appears, 4 or 5 feet long, perhaps a young bull or lemon – it is hard to tell in the dim light. We see only the dorsal fin slicing the flat, still water, and an occasional glimpse of tail. The predator dashes through the mullet, while its foot-long prey scatter to confuse and avoid the assault. As the shark passes, they reassemble into a tight knot of swimmers, almost touching each other. It circles back, again and again. The contest continues, gradually moving along the tangled mangrove roots where the mullet huddle as best they can. The skirmish moves at about the same speed as us and we watch, transfixed. The feeding continues until it is almost too dark to see. Suddenly it is over as quickly as it began, leaving us with questions. Have the mullet scattered and headed for deeper water? Has the shark fed to satisfaction?

We turn away from the mangrove and head southwest into deeper water. It is dark and the distant lights of Tarpon Springs wink on. Our little boat picks up speed as we depart the lee of the island and pick up the northwest breeze again. This time the wind is on our quarter, the ideal point of sail. The waves come up behind us, and rather than crashing through, we lift our stern to them so they slide effortlessly beneath us. It's a gentler ride and a dry one. Even with a quickly dropping temperature, we are comfortable.

Our boat is not long enough to require running lights, but we each have flashlights ready to locate gear or to shine on the sail if another boat comes near. But we have little need of them, except for an occasional flash at the compass to ensure we are still on course.

*Astern, a long trail of phosphorescence, unearthly green-glowing plankton, marks our wake, a ghostly road in the sea.*

The sky turns black and a blaze of stars appears overhead. A bowl of night embraces us. Astern, a long trail of phosphorescence, unearthly green-glowing plankton, marks our wake, a ghostly road in the sea. We settle down for a long ride, dreading the chores of putting the boat on the trailer and the clean-up and then the long drive back to Tampa. I sip at the last of the lukewarm coffee from my Thermos while my shipmate lights his pipe. He remarks that throughout the entire day we have not seen even one other boat. FW

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*Henry Cordova was born in Tampa and has lived in the Sunshine State most of his life. He was originally trained as a scientist and mathematician, but now works as a civil servant in South Florida. Cordova is a U.S. Navy veteran, and his hobbies include amateur astronomy, sailing, celestial navigation and writing nonfiction articles for magazines.*

# A special group of officers

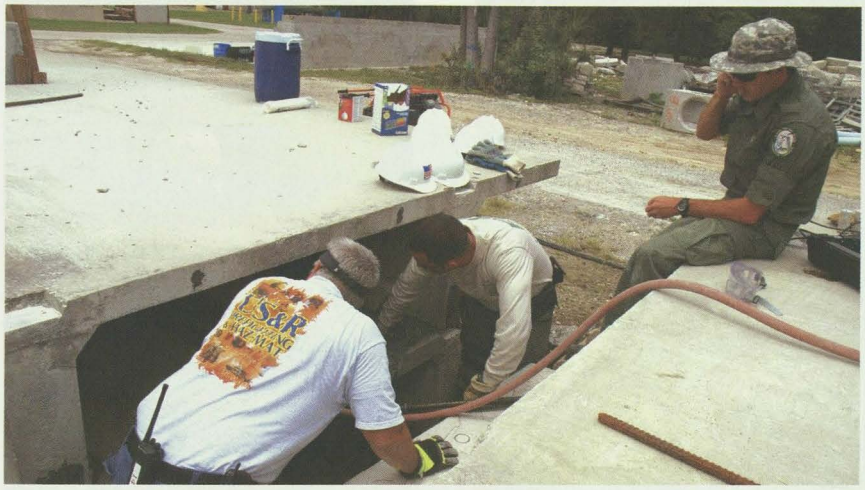
*By Carol Pratt ~ Photographs by Tim Donovan*

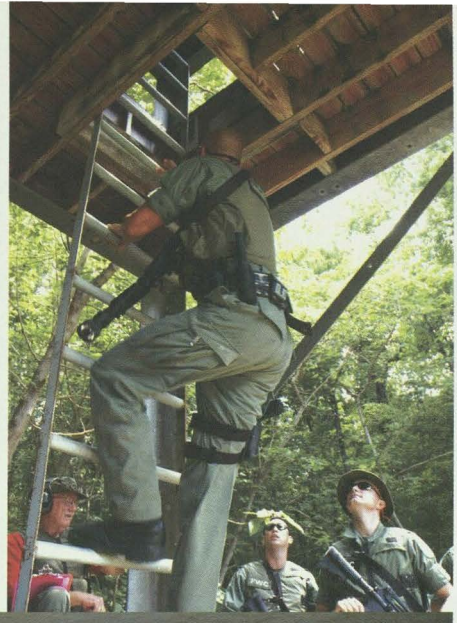
The Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is a group of elite teams of law enforcement personnel created by the agency to deal with potential threats to public safety and to protect property and natural resources. These men are prepared for the worst and are ready for immediate deployment to a variety of unusual occurrences and special events.

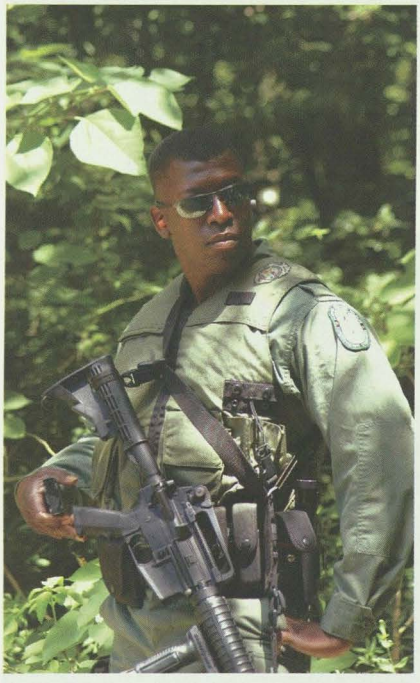
The SOG responds to natural and manmade disasters. In 2004 and 2005, they were deployed throughout Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana after a series of hurricanes pummeled

the Gulf Coast. They have also helped provide security for the Super Bowl, provided escorts for dignitaries, searched for lost or wanted persons and helped other law enforcement agencies deal with the control and safety of large crowds. Like all FWC officers, they are trained to work in the roughest and most remote terrain and on the water under the worst circumstances.

There are five 15-man teams throughout the state. SOG members come prepared, having received rigorous special training and armed with a variety of equipment – everything from chainsaws and generators to night-vision goggles and riot gear. FW

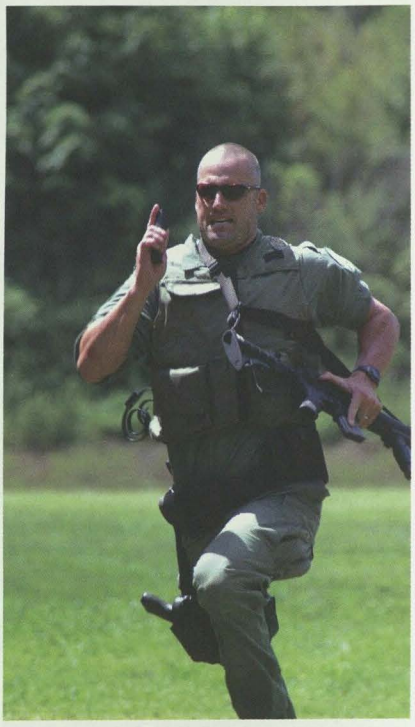




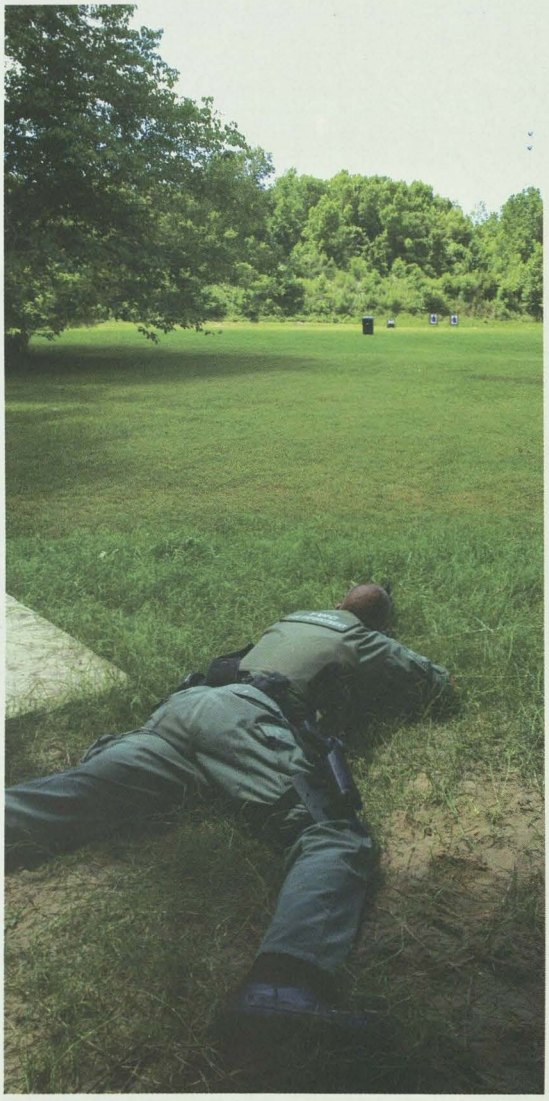


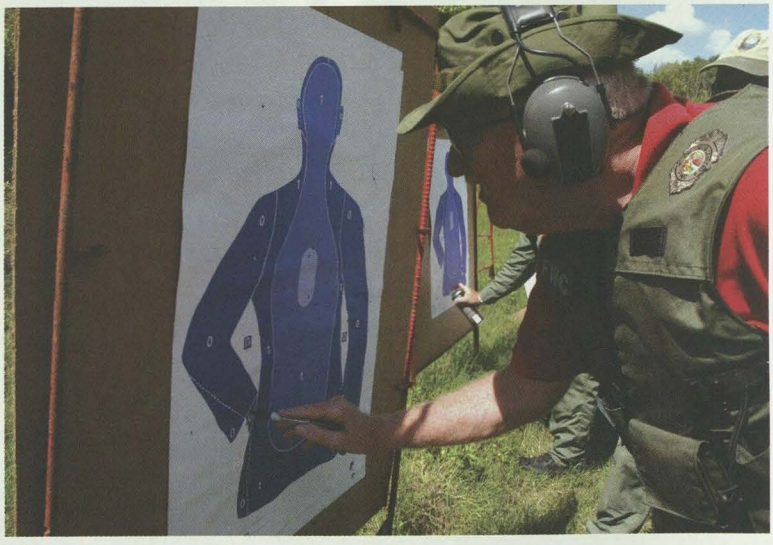
***Top left and above:*** *Officers practice search-and-rescue techniques.* ***Top right:*** *Officers climb a tower on the firearms course.* ***Left:*** *Officer Claude Stacey waits for his turn to shoot.*

***Above:*** *Officer Crickett Bailey exits the woods while running through the land navigation course.* ***Left:*** *Investigator Eric Johnston uses his GPS on the land navigation course.* ***Facing page, top:*** *The officers of the FWC's Special Operations Group.* ***Center:*** *FWCSOG officers train with members of the U.S. Coast Guard.* ***Bottom:*** *Capt. Brad Williams, statewide coordinator for FWCSOG, conducts a training class.*



***Above:*** *Officer Tony Lee takes aim during the firearms competition.* ***Right, top:*** *Officer Louis Hinds runs the firearms course.* ***Right, middle:*** *Lt. Mike Sommers totals the scores from an officer's target shots.* ***Right, bottom:*** *Lt. Christian Rodriguez on the firearms course.* ***Below:*** *A SOG officer takes aim at a target 300 feet away.*





*Forward-looking infrared (FLIR) cameras enable law enforcement officers to see what is happening – day or night and in all types of weather. They are used for search-and-rescue, land and sea patrol, reconnaissance and other conservation law enforcement duties. They can record what is seen onto a DVD for later study or evidentiary use. These systems include video downlink transmitters, allowing the images to be viewed both in the aircraft and on the ground via portable receiver units.* ***Above:*** *A FLIR camera mounted on one of the FWC's helicopters.* ***Right:*** *FWCSOG officers watching the monitor of a FLIR camera.* ***Below and top right:*** *Close-up views of a FLIR system monitor.*

# Are you looking at me?

JOHNNY VILLARONGA

Wildlife watching is fun and rewarding, but even the most responsible viewers may inadvertently put themselves, or the animals they seek, at risk. Please keep the following in mind when visiting Florida's natural areas.

Every animal differs in how close you may approach before it pauses in its feeding, nesting or resting activities, or before it flees altogether. Disturbances can be disastrous for animals, especially the cumulative effect of frequent disruptions, a common occurrence at beaches, waterways and other busy recreation sites. When disturbed, animals expend valuable energy reserves needed for migrating, tending to young or escaping predators. Fleeing parents may abandon a nest and expose eggs or young to temperature extremes or to predators.

There are signs to let you know when you are too close. Has the animal stopped feeding? Is it looking at you? Does it appear agitated or skittish? Does the animal begin to move away? These behaviors are all signs of disturbance, and you should move back immediately. When possible, use binoculars or zoom lenses to extend your view. If an adult animal allows you to approach, something's wrong. It may be sick or injured or capable of aggressive behavior.

Don't feed wild animals, as they may abandon their natural diet and lose their fear of humans. Such animals can become aggressive or dangerous or may risk crossing busy roads to seek out human habitations. To report people feeding wildlife, including wild dolphins or sharks, call Wildlife Alert toll-free at 888-404-FWCC.

Young animals are rarely abandoned by their parents, so if you find one that looks helpless, the parents are probably nearby, waiting until you leave. The longer you stay, the longer the youngster must go without food and protection from predators.

While viewing wildlife, respect private property, even if the animal does not. Obey posted signs near nesting areas and stay on roads, trails and paths to minimize habitat disturbance.

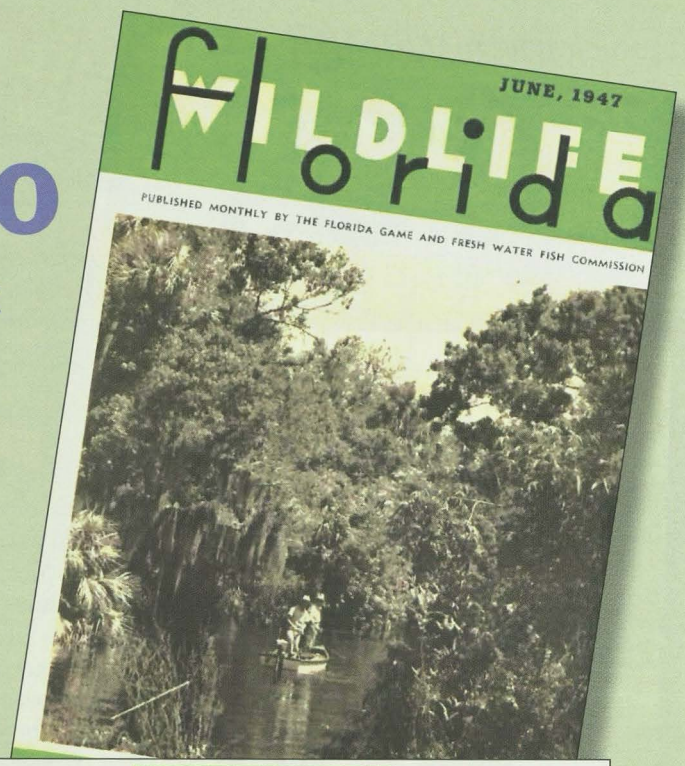
Finally, keep your pets at home. They may frighten or harm the wildlife you are seeking; many sites prohibit them altogether. It's against Florida law for you or your pets to chase, harass or harm wildlife. FW

*A northern mockingbird peers around a tree trunk.*

# 60 years ago

## *Florida Wildlife* made its debut

In June of 1947 the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission created *Florida Wildlife* Magazine as an education tool to "acquaint and educate the public about the many problems connected with the immense task of conserving a natural heritage for all future generations."




### *Florida Wildlife* Magazine Facts

- Precursors to *Florida Wildlife* include *Florida Woods and Waters* (1929-1931), *Monthly News Bulletin* (1931-1932), *The Florida Conservator* (1934-1935), *Outdoor Florida* (1936) and *Florida Game and Fish* (1940-1942).
- After 56 years of publication, *Florida Wildlife* ceased publication with the November/December 2003 issue, due to legislative budget cuts.
- *Florida Wildlife* resumed publication with the April 2005 issue .
- The first editor was William W. Weeks, followed by Bill Snyder, Jack Grant, Gene Gruber, William W. Perry, Raymond Royster, Robert A. Dahne, Bill Hansen, Gene Smith, Morrie Naggiar, John Waters Jr., Andrea Blount, Dick Sublette and Kelly Broderick.
- Art editors were Wallace Hughes, John Roberge and Lizabeth West.
- In the early 1950s, paid advertising was accepted but was discontinued by 1955 .
- The magazine was a monthly from 1947 to July 1976, when it moved to the current bimonthly publication schedule.
- The first multi-color cover appeared in 1952.
- Color photography was first used on the cover with the December 1953 edition.
- May of 1976 saw the first four-color photographs published on the inside pages.
- In 1994, *Florida Wildlife* moved to an all-color format.
- *Florida Wildlife* was initially distributed free of charge but began charging 10 cents a copy or $1 per year in September of 1949.
- Articles, illustrations and photographs are submitted by FWC employees, freelancers and readers.

**WILLIAM W. WEEKS**
**Editor**

### A NEW IMPLEMENT

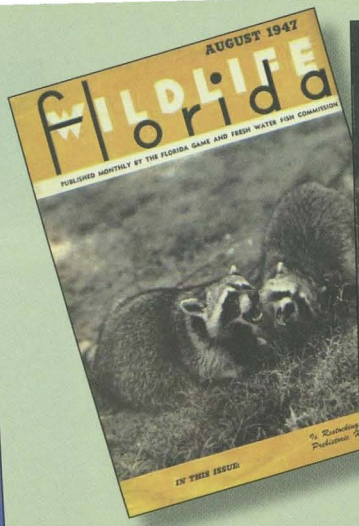
With our wildlife resources growing slimmer by the month, an alarmed nation is resorting to a new implement to sow the seeds of conservation. The implement is education. In some states it has blossomed into a vast complex machine costing more than $100,000 annually; in other states it is simpler and less expensive. In some states it isn't even a new implement, but in most it is fresh off the assembly line and still stiff with newness. But regardless of the age or size of this machine, like the automobile, it's here to stay. More and more conservationists have come to realize that education is the only solution to the relentless shrinkage of our natural resources.

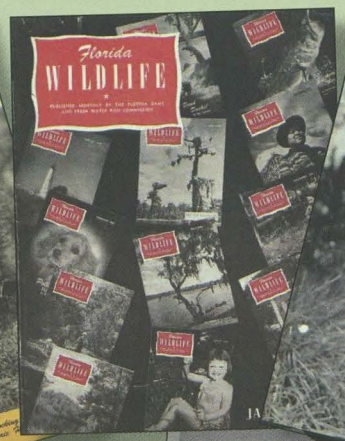
Although Mr. Average Citizen is the chief beneficiary of conservation he, strangely enough, must be reminded of it. And one simple reminder won't do the job. His responsibility to nature's endowments must be placed before him firmly, entertainingly and —constantly. Since little Grammar School Johnny of today is Mr. Average Citizen of tomorrow, the same dish must be placed before him. In other words every man, woman and child in the nation must be made to realize that the burden of salvaging our wildlife rests square on their shoulders. A long-range, comprehensive program is the only vehicle which can successfully carry this load.

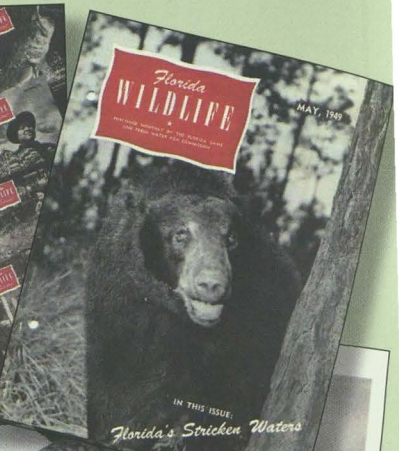
Here in Florida we are at last assembling the framework for such a machine. FLORIDA WILDLIFE is one of the first essential parts. The ideal educational setup is an efficient composite of information, oral and visual teaching, and plain old Florida-bred publicity. FLORIDA WILDLIFE will carry the bulk of the information load. Anyone who knows the facts of our wildlife situation quickly realizes the need for conservation. But all too many people aren't acquainted with those facts. Distributing them by word of mouth would be a destructively slow process. So the only immediate alternative is to present them through the medium of a regular publication. If the publication can disseminate game and fish facts entertainingly enough to be enjoyable and yet impressively enough to be effective, it will be a success. We hope FLORIDA WILDLIFE will be able to do just that. If it can, one vital cog in our conservation education program will be rolling.

**Visit FloridaWildlifeMagazine.com to view these and other archived stories in their entirety.**

# Florida Wildlife the 40s




## Feast . . . or Famine?

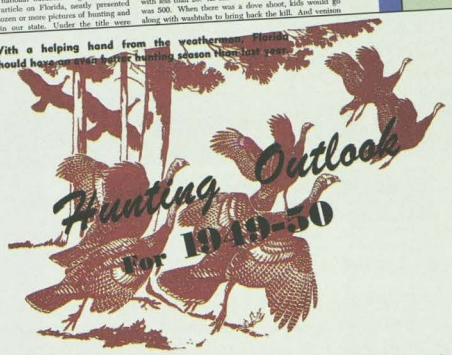
A GUEST EDITORIAL

by Fuller Warren

GOVERNOR OF FLORIDA

NOT long ago I was looking through one of the big national outdoors magazines. In it was an article on Florida, neatly presented with a dozen or more pictures of hunting and fishing in our state. Under the title were those h... "H... SETTL... ONE ... AND ... FRESH... The ... was p... envy o... nations... thing t... the sp... accord... He... interest... future... long ... tion; t... tinued ... is was ... As ... citizens... handw... Too m... granted... natural... complet... in-the-... acres ... and th... Americ... Bu... spendi... resour...

youngster in West Florida, I remember how duck hunters complained if they came back from a trip with less than 20. At one time I believe the season limit was 500. When there was a dove shoot, kids would go along with washtubs to bring back the kill. And venison


With a helping hand from the weathermen, Florida should have an even better hunting season than last year's
Hunting Outlook
For 1949-50

IT'S HARD to predict the outcome of any hunting season, but if late summer and early fall game surveys mean anything, Florida hunters are heading into a better-than-average year afield. Most hunters agree that last year was the best season in years on all species except the bobwhite quail. On the basis of advance surveys there's no reason to believe it will be any worse this year. In fact with a blessing or two from the weathermen things may be even better.

The bobwhite quail, of course, is Florida's No. 1 game bird—and the game commission's No. 1 headache. Two years ago a devastating hurricane and a wave of high water in South Florida seriously cut back what appeared to be a climbing quail population, and the birds have been slow to recover. Generally there seems to be an increase in bobwhites this year; however, the reverse is true of the usually productive quail country of southwest Florida. There a hot dry spring and wet summer has hampered reproduction of what was only a fair stock last year.

Over the rest of the state birds have fared very well. Most conservation districts reported a slight increase in population. However, ...

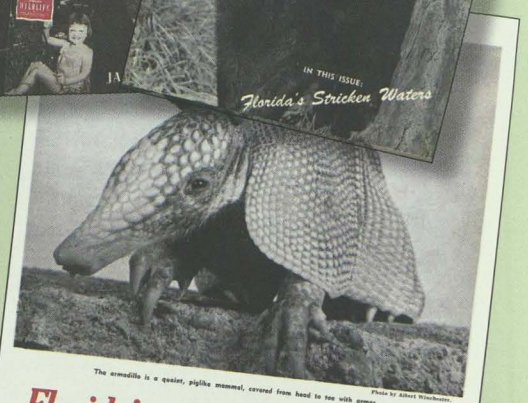
THE TURKEY situation is still looking up. Last year turkey hunters had their best season in years. These wonderful game birds were taken in areas that had not afforded good turkey hunting in decades. Though not as marked as last year there has been a definite increase throughout most of the state this year. Some sections reported no increases this fall, but only a couple of isolated areas showed any decline. This steady climb in population is attributed largely to better protection, and to the gobbler law which was in effect in three districts last season. The law covers all five districts this year.

Despite a heavy infestation of screw-worms, Florida's white-tail deer have held their own, and in many areas show a definite increase. The parasitic worm, more prevalent because of the mild weather last winter, struck hard during the spring and summer. It took a particularly heavy toll of the fawn crop, and even weeded out some adult deer.

The best deer hunting in the state will be found again in the vast Eglin Field Reservation, where one out of buck. Hunting rules on the reservation, the rest of the state, except rifles

Forest, with its usual 30-day con- offer good shooting. Upward to the Forest every year. ters may expect somewhat larger use of the five-inch antler law last year. This measure has ...

A large portion of the magazine was devoted to articles about hunting and fishing – where to, how to and how successful others had been. The first articles about nonnative species, especially the pervasive water hyacinth and the steps taken by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC) to eradicate it, appear in the magazine. Reports on GFC scientists and their work, as well as law enforcement officers, are printed, and each issue lists the name and offense of every citizen cited for wildlife violations.



The armadillo is a queer, piglike mammal, covered from head to toe with armor. Photo by Albert Winchester.

## Florida's Armored Invasion

BY COLEMAN NEWMAN

**The armadillo has invaded Florida--but don't worry, he's just a sheep in wolf's clothing**

OCTOBER, 1949

FLORIDA is being invaded. It's not a frontal attack but a determined undercover infiltration through the back woods and swamps which began in the early twenties and has spread to 29 counties by last count. The invader—the armadillo—an outstanding oddity among American mammals, is causing the farmer and sportsman in the sections involved considerable head scratching.

Mr. Quail and Mr. Turkey Hunter returns from a hard, unfruitful day in the woods muttering, "No game. Ole armadillo has been eating eggs in the nests again."

The farmer gapes at a rooted-up spot in this year's

3

## Florida's Stricken Waters!

by Bill Weeks and Howard R. Bissland

**This startling article reveals the water hyacinth for what it is -- a sweeping scourge that is costing Florida $10,000,000 a year**

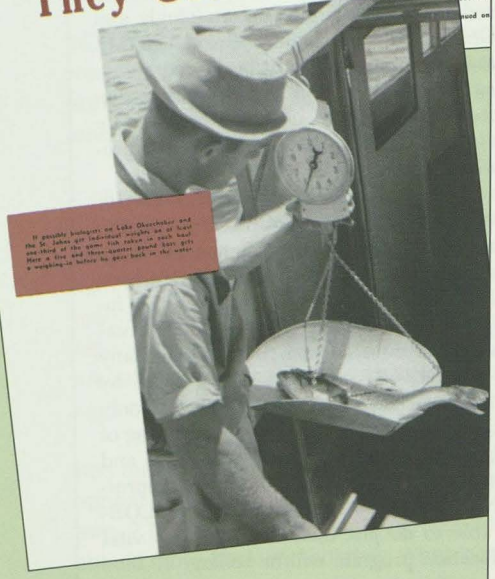
Part 1

FLORIDA is a land of stricken waters. Some are surely dead, strangled by a garrote of lovely leaves and flowers. Other waters are our pride and joy—our broad and festive rivers, all lit up unattended while a green and growing canvas gnaws at their vitals. In six decades we have allowed a handful of hyacinth seeds to germinate into a creeping disease in every fresh water lake and stream in the state. It sounds frightening—and it is!

The State of Florida has nearly 2,500,000 acres of potentially valuable fresh water—more than any other state in the Union.

(Co-author Howard R. Bissland is a biologist for the U. S. Soil Conservation Service. The bulk of his information on the water hyacinth and how it has affected navigation, irrigation, flood control and fishing in Florida was gathered during the course of his duties.)

## They Get the Facts!


If possibly biologist or Lake Okeechobee and the St. Johns are interested samples as at least one-third of the game fish taken in each boat. Note a live and three quarter pound bass with a weighing-in bottle to save back to the water.

## GAME and FISH VIOLATIONS

There were 400 game and fish violations in Florida last month. This was 159 more than the previous month's violations. Almost half of the total, 198, were found guilty of fishing without a license. Seventy-seven were convicted for taking undersized fish, while 30 others exceeded their bag limit on fish. Several were fined for illegal firing or possession of guns. The heaviest fines listed were -200 passed out against two St. Lucie County residents for illegal possession of doe deer.

| Name of Violator | Violation | Fine | County | Arresting Officer |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| FIRST DISTRICT | | | | |
| Levi Langston, Hill | Fishing with more than 1 pole | $25.00* | Charlotte | C. O. Cross |
| Joseph T. Walch, Sebring | Possession of undersized bass | 25.00 | Glades | Joe Cross |
| Pete Gordon, Clewiston | Fishing without license | 25.00 | Glades | Joe Cross |
| Lee Gray, Clewiston | Fishing without license | 25.00* | Glades | Frank Turner |
| E. T. Ingram, Belle Glades | Fishing without license | 25.00* | Glades | S. R. Bull |
| N. N. Starling, Belle Glades | Possession of undersized bass | 25.00* | Glades | Wm. P. Cooper |
| Percy Pankerin, Fort Myers | Possession of gun in breeding ground | 25.00* | Glades | Seth A. Howard |
| Thomas Mollatesh, Fort Myers | Possession of gun in breeding ground | 25.00* | Glades | Seth A. Howard |
| I. E. Bannerton, Belle Glades | Possession of undersized bass | 25.00 | Glades | Joe Cross |
| C. M. Morrell, Plant City | Possession of undersized bass | 25.00* | Glades | Reaves Harris |
| Malcolm McAplen, La Belle | Possession of undersized bass | 25.00* | Glades | Reaves Harris |
| A. B. Campbell, Ionia, Alabama | Shooting fish | 15.00* | Hardee | J. L. Cathcart |
| Carl Strickland, Clewiston | Possession of gun in breeding ground | 25.00 | Hendry | Frank Turner |
| John Q. Smith, Clewiston | Fishing without a license | 12.00* | Hendry | Powers and Turner |
| Dan Long, Immokalee | Possession of wild game | 25.00 | Hendry | Frank Turner |
| Jim Gillis, Holopaw | Fishing without license | 50.00 | Hernando | R. L. Wiggins |
| W. J. Scarbrough, Lake Placid | Possession of undersized bass | 25.00 | Highlands | G. W. Shackelford |
| Wm. Earl Carpenter, Sebring | Fishing without license | 10.00 | Highlands | R. C. Taylor |
| Gordon Bartlett, Fort Myers | Fishing without license | 10.00 | Highlands | Cobb and Taylor |
| T. J. Donovan, Jr., Lake Placid | Possession of undersized bass | 25.00 | Highlands | G. W. Shackelford |
| Newton D. Shelley, Fort Pierce | Possession undersized fish | 25.00 | Highlands | R. C. Taylor |
| Henry Hall, Sebring | Possession undersized fish; undersized bass | 25.00 | Highlands | Cobb and Taylor |
| Carrie Dudley, Lakeland | Taking undersized bass | 10.00 | Highlands | Cobb and Taylor |
| Alton Smith, Lakeland | Fishing without license | 10.00 | Highlands | Wm. P. Cooper |
| Joseph P. Chastain, Lakeland | Fishing without license | 10.00 | Highlands | G. W. Shackelford |
| George Berry, Plant City | Fishing without license | Day Arrest | Hillsboro | E. P. Campbell |
| W. D. Anderson, Lithia, Rhode Island | Fishing without license | Court | Hillsborough | Thomas Hazelwood |
| Andrew Thurston, Valrico | Possession undersized bass | Court | Hillsborough | Campbell and Sparkman |
| R. L. Johnson, Fort Myers | Fishing without license | Court | Lee | Whitehead and Yeomans |
| J. C. Ferguson, Fort Myers | Possession of undersized alligator | 50.00 | Manatee | R. N. Cook |
| John W. Hall, Tampa | Fishing without license | 25.00* | Pasco | Carl C. Walker |
| Lawrence Hatcher, Park Place, North Carolina | Fishing without license | 25.00* | Pasco | Carl C. Walker |
| Grady Kirkley, Tampa | Fishing without license | 25.00* | Pasco | Carl C. Walker |
| James Allen, Tampa | Fishing without license | 25.00* | Pasco | M. E. Grantham |
| Leroy White, Tampa | Fishing without license | 25.00* | Pasco | M. E. Grantham |
| Charlie M. Rowe, Tampa | Fishing without license | 25.00* | Pasco | M. E. Grantham |
| Eva Allen, Tampa | Fishing without license | 25.00* | Pasco | M.E. Grantham |
| Jamie E. Walker, Tampa | Fishing without license | 25.00* | Pasco | M. E. Grantham |
| Eddie Lucas, Tampa | Fishing without license | 25.00* | Pasco | M. E. Grantham |
| Alton L. Segler, Tampa | Fishing without license | 25.00* | Pasco | Carl C. Walker |
| S. G. McCraine, Tampa | Fishing without license | 25.00* | Pasco | Carl C. Walker |
| Andrew Moore, Tampa | Fishing without license | 25.00* | Pasco | Carl C. Walker |
| H. R. Rabasin, St. Petersburg | Fishing without license | 12.00 | Pinellas | J. T. Philio |
| Second King, Lakeland | Exceeding bag limit on bream | 1.00 | Polk | D. L. Petty |
| Clinton Brown, Lakeland | Exceeding bag limit on bream | 1.00 | Polk | D. L. Petty |
| Lois Mae King, Lakeland | Exceeding bag limit on bream | 1.00 | Polk | D. L. Petty |
| F. L. Price, Winter Haven | Fishing with illegal seine | 15.00 | Polk | C. E. Collins |
| Mrs T. D. Galley, Tampa | Fishing without license | 10.00* | Polk | D. L. Petty |
| J. B. Crenshaw, Winter Haven | Fishing with illegal seine | 15.00 | Polk | R. S. Sumner |
| Glen B. Schubert, Lakeland | Possession undersized bass | Court | Polk | Collins and Whittle |
| J. W. Holloway, Lakeland | Possession of undersized bass | Court | Polk | Collins and Whittle |
| V. O. Turner, Lakeland | Possession undersized bass | Court | Polk | Collins and Whittle |
| O. W. Redmond, Lakeland | Possession undersized bass | Court | Polk | Collins and Whittle |
| R. L. Ellis, Tampa | Exceeding bag limit of perch | 50.00* | Polk | Collins and Whittle |
| Rose Johnson, Tampa | Exceeding bag limit of perch | 50.00* | Polk | Collins |
| Martin Harris, Tampa | Exceeding bag limit of bream | Court | Polk | R. O. Whittle |
| Otto Johnson, Tampa | Exceeding bag limit of bream | Court | Polk | R. O. Whittle |
| Charlie Johnson, Tampa | Exceeding bag limit of bream | Court | Polk | R. S. Sumner |
| Bertha Glaiser, Tampa | Exceeding bag limit of bream | Court | Polk | R. S. Sumner |
| Bertha Syrus, Tampa | Exceeding bag limit of bream | Court | Polk | C. E. Collins |
| Willie Jackson, Tampa | Exceeding bag limit of bream | Court | Polk | C. E. Collins |
| James Kirby, Tampa | Killing waterfowl with gun by use of headlight | Court | Polk | Whittle, Collins, Sumner |

* Bond forfeited. ** Suspended sentence. S.D. Sentence deferred.

Assistant Chief Wildlife Officer Mallory Walsh, with hands outstretched, describes the operation of an illegal hoop net to the class.

## BOOT CAMP for WARDENS

by BILL SNYDER

WHEN the State Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission launched its first Wildlife Officers' Training School at Camp Blanding last month, it definitely moved out of the "horse and buggy" stage of wildlife conservation.

Officers who succeed in clearing the hurdles of the intricate four-week school course will graduate with the slightly watered-down characteristics of a G-man, a good soldier, a criminal lawyer, and super-saleaman, all combined. In addition, he'll be a walking encyclopedia when it comes to identifying the birds, animals, fish, and mammals that make up Florida's outdoors, and he'll be qualified to operate a two-way radio and tell you what's wrong with it when it breaks down.

Dr. Benjamin B. Leavitt, University of Florida biology department, lectures on Florida mammals.

In other words, students who make passing grades at the commission's school will be fully qualified to enter into a vocation where ability and versatility should be prime requisites. The new schooling system definitely divorces the antiquated idea that a recommendation from a politician is a guarantee that makes an efficient game warden.

Frankly, I wasn't sold on the school idea when it was first announced. I was born in the "horse and buggy" days and I'm kind of hard-headed when it comes to converting me to a lot of new-fangled ideas. I was the same way about the inauguration of the commission's new system for making and training wardens.

Four weeks of studying books and listening to lectures may be all right for some folks, I told myself, but it's strictly the bunk when it comes to making a good game-law enforcement officer. But I was wrong in my snap

# Florida Wildlife the 50s

Hunting and fishing remained the focus of the magazine, and promoting these activities, especially with children, increased in importance. Accounts of species with diminishing populations began to appear.

## REPORT on the KEY DEER

**The death knell is ringing for the tiny Key Deer. Can they be saved? Will they be saved?**

(A Commission Report)

Despite the best efforts of numerous governmental and private agencies, the United unique group of deer in the United States is still hard-pressed for survival. Smallest of all the deer in this country, Florida's miniature Key deer are still clinging precariously to the slenderest thread of existence.

Hunted, hounded and driven until their number has been reduced to the present total of from 25 to 50 head, these rapidly disappearing deer average less than 50 pounds in weight, range less than 28 inches in overall length from nose to tail, and stand about 26 inches high at the shoulder. Although appearing to be miniature reproductions of the eastern whitetailed deer, they are sometimes referred to as being a separate species of animal.

They presently range over about 10,000 acres of area in a small group of sub-tropical coral and limestone keys about 100 miles south of the Florida mainland. So far as known, they inhabit only the keys known as Big Pine, No Name, Middle Torch, Little Torch, Summerland, Ramrod, Knockemdown and Cudjoe keys. They are apparently of small key to fresh swimming from key to key in search of forage and fresh water holes. They usually do most of their traveling at night, resting during the hot tropical heat of the day. This latter trait probably accounts in part for the fact that no one has yet produced a good photograph of a Key deer.

These tiny deer were probably the first American deer seen by white man. On his fourth trip to the New World, Columbus described a "stag" which was undoubtedly this same Key deer.

The usual time for these illegal hunts has been during the period from the latter part of February through April. Illegal hunting by the burning method has been reportedly reported from the area as recently as April 25, 1958. No one has yet been caught and convicted of this crime, although every attempt is now being made to patrol and protect the area through Commission facilities. The biggest single danger to the [illegible] however, is not illegal hunting but the [illegible] settlement and [illegible]. The only [illegible]

JANUARY, 1951

## Let's Go Fishing

For thousands of years, mankind has spent endless hours concocting magical charms, chemical formulas and exotic processes that might be used as medicines for curing the ailments of other human beings. Millions upon millions of dollars have been spent in this endless search for an all-inclusive cure-all potion.

But in all this time so many of us have completely disregarded that essential formula for health and happiness — relaxation. All of our drugs, all of our medications and all of our sciences are almost as nothing beside the simple treatment prescribed by Mother Nature that is contained in the three words: "Let's go fishing!"

For fishing, as any angler knows, is an avocation that somehow sets a man apart from his fellowmen. Not that it makes him a better man than others, but that it lends a more distinctive flavor to his way of thinking and his method of living. Fishing leaves a special mark upon a man's spirit that is clearly discernible only to his fellow anglers.

Never forget that a boy who is fishing is not delinquent, and a man who is angling has no time for the meaner or more sordid things of life.

Many a man goes fishing, not to catch fish, but simply to go fishing. He wants something to take him out-of-doors, away from the clash and clatter of modern [illegible] where he can think [illegible] on such [illegible] balances.

## The Doodlebug School

By A. D. ALDRICH, Director
Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission

The elderly retired gentleman carried a box of sandy dirt into a small class-room. He was there by pre-arranged appointment with the teacher.

"My children," he said with a smile that took in every child, "this is The Doodlebug School. I have here a box of dirt. And here a doodlebug. An insect also known as an ant-lion."

Then, in not more than four square inches of dirt, the elderly gentleman taught the lessons of natural resource conservation, and the intricate balances and checks of nature. All he used was sandy dirt and one insect, but he held them up as a mirror of life.

For conservation, you see, can best be taught in your own backyard, by studying the wonderful lessons of living found in an anthill, or a wasp's nest, or a butterfly-cocoon.

Really, you don't need movies, or books, or color-slides, or lectures, or exhibits, although all these aids are fine when used in the right place and at the right time.

But nature is all a true natural resource may be studied every you, as an adult, c child, or a neighbor conservation in your All you need is a d borrowed library b own imagination and and your child, will wonderful world i blade of grass, the chanics of a tiny sp the song and life of dynamic energies o

As a person who hours of my spare working with Boy while spending mu life as a professio worker, I have had of seeing the truth A child's mind unfo and a child is best

JULY, 1959

tion by making conservation his way of life.

In Florida, our best thinking developed by our conservation educators is that conservation should be woven into all school subjects. For best effect, conservation cannot be taught entirely as a separate school subject. You can't rightfully teach conservation in a fifty-minute class twice a week. But you can teach it continuously by weaving the idea of good conservation into all subjects.

Yes, conservation can be woven into the geography lesson, the English class, physical education periods, and even the school cafeteria.

What we want to do is have conservation applied to practical living. We want to teach our children the wisdom of conserving household electricity and school clothing. The profits of wise utilization of the food and soft drinks in our kitchen refrigerators. The facts of the live-and-let-live rule. The necessity for preserving the pennies in our bank account.

Then we want to teach the effects [illegible] and his civilization upon [illegible] conservation. It

of medicine that's "good for you."

Well, conservation is not a dose of goodie-goodies. Conservation is an essential and valuable social philosophy that should be blended into our method of thinking and our way of acting and living.

Like the word democracy, the word conservation is hard to define. You, and I, know what democracy means. We know inside our heart and brain. Democracy lives within us. And we would be hard put to accurately define democracy in a few well-chosen words. I doubt if anyone of us could so define democracy — because it is an almost indefinable philosophy of living.

Hunting regulations fill a single page and wildlife management areas were being developed. Today, the regulations are a 36-page booklet, and there are more than 140 public hunting areas across the state.

## HUNTING RULES AND REGULATIONS 1951-5[illegible]

| Species | Open Season | Day's Bag | Season's Bag | Possession Limit | Daily Shooting [illegible] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Marsh Hens (Rails) | Sept. 15-Nov. 13 | 15 | | 15 | One-half hour before sunset. |
| Ducks | Nov. 22-Jan. 5 | 4[1] | | 8[1] | One-half hour before sunset. At noon opening |
| Geese | Nov. 22-Jan. 5 | 2 Canada 3 Blue | | 2 Canada 3 Blue | One-half hour before sunset. At noon opening |
| Coots | Nov. 22-Jan. 5 | 10 | | 10 | One-half hour before sunset. At noon opening |
| Dove | Dec. 15-Jan. 13[2] | 8 | | 8 | [illegible] noon [illegible] |
| Deer (Bucks Only) 5" Antler | Nov. 20-Jan. 6 | 1 | 2 | 2 | One-half sunset. |
| Squirrel | Nov. 20-Feb. 1 | 10 Grey 3 Fox | | 20 Grey 6 Fox | One-half sunset. |
| Turkey (Gobblers Only) | Nov. 20-Feb. 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | One-half sunset. |
| Panther | Nov. 20-Jan. 6 | No Limit | No Limit | No Limit | One-half sunset. |
| Bear | Nov. 20-Jan. 6 | No Limit | No Limit | No Limit | One-half sunset. |
| Quail | Nov. 20-Feb. 1 | 10 | | 20 | One-half sunset. |

Duck Stamp required for taking ducks and geese.
Use of rifles prohibited when taking migratory birds. Use of .22 rim fire rifles prohibited
Shot guns must be plugged to 3-shell capacity.
[1] Only one wood duck permitted.
[2] EXCEPT in Dade, Broward and Monroe Counties where the season is Oct. 1 to Oct
NOTE: Except for first 6 days, hunting in First, Second, Fourth and Fifth Districts is prohi squirrel, bear and panther on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays. Opening Day, Closing mas Day, New Year's Day open to hunting.

GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMM
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

TEAR OUT AND SAVE

OCTOBER, 1951

## THE GATES are OPENING

By DON ROBERTS

A FIVE-DOLLAR PUBLIC AREA STAMP WILL GIVE YOU A PASSPORT TO MORE THAN A MILLION ACRES OF HUNTING HEAVEN

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Apalachicola Wildlife Management Area | 106,000 acres |
| 2. Osceola Wildlife Management Area | 65,000 acres |
| 3. Steinhatchee Wildlife Management Area | 190,000 acres |
| 4. Gulf Hammock Wildlife Management Area | 100,000 acres |
| 5. Ocala Wildlife Management Area | 183,000 acres |
| 6. Tomoka Wildlife Management Area | 50,000 acres |
| 7. Fenholloway Wildlife Management Area | 57,600 acres |
| 8. Avon Park Wildlife Management Area | 50,000 acres |
| 9. Charlotta Wildlife Management Area | 40,000 acres |
| 10. Indian Trail Wildlife Management Area | 45,000 acres |
| 11. Collier Wildlife Management Area | 350,000 acres |
| 12. Hendry Wildlife Management Area | 85,000 acres |
| 13. Eglin Military Reservation | 350,000 acres |

1. Charlotta area will be open to quail hunting only on special quail hunting permit.
2. Eglin area open to hunting on special Air Force permit.

Game management restoration programs have greatly increased Florida's wild turkey population.

## A Year of Progress

A REPORT OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION DURING THE PAST FISCAL YEAR

By BEN McLAUCHLIN

As trustee and guardian of one of the State of Florida's richest holdings — the vast unincorporated assets of our fleeting wildlife — the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has recently completed another fiscal year. To the stockholders — the citizens of Florida — and especially to those who have financed this trusteeship with their purchases of hunting and fishing licenses, the following summary of the past year's accomplishments is respectfully submitted.

A major change in the administration of Game Commission programs was made during the 1951-52 fiscal year. Five divisional areas were established — Northwest Florida, Northeast Florida, Central Florida, Southern Florida, and Everglades — with headquarters in Panama City, Jacksonville, Ocala, Williston, Lakeland, and Okeechobee, respectively.

Each division office is staffed with a director (who supervises the activities and has charge over the personnel in his particular area), an educational officer, pilot and airplane, game and fish management officers, and wildlife officers.

This set-up has enabled the Commission's limited personnel to work more efficiently by concentrating their efforts and studies to within a smaller area, and has eliminated much lost time due to travel. This move has produced a broader knowledge of each area's requirements in the way of conservation measures that would obtain the most benefit. It has also led to more cooperative teamwork between the Commission and the public.

The accomplishments of the past year's work can not be fully described in this limited space, but the progress made in the various major programs and projects can be summarized as follows:

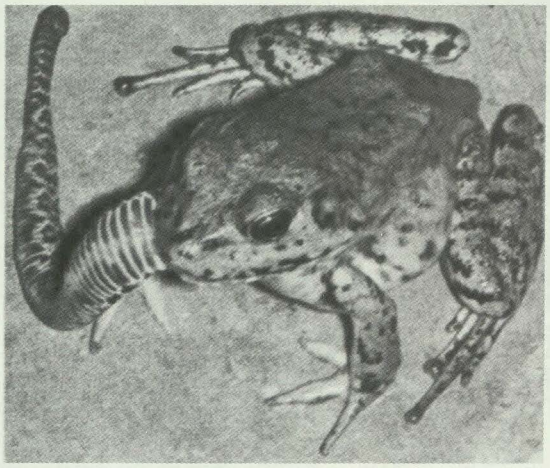
Reports on the GFCs progress were printed yearly.

*Florida Wildlife*

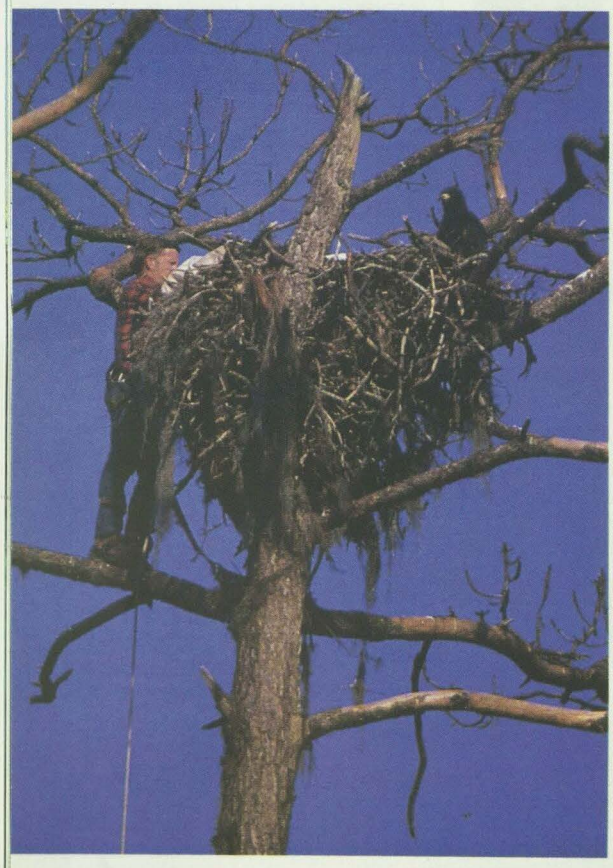
# the photos

Throughout the decades, *Florida Wildlife* has been know for its outstanding and unusual photographs.

***Above:*** *A gallinule stuck its head in a split-out portion of a dock in search of food and then couldn't get it out. After the picture was taken, the bird was freed and flew off into the marsh.* ***Below:*** *Climber Wayne Norton prepares to enter a bald eagle nest.*



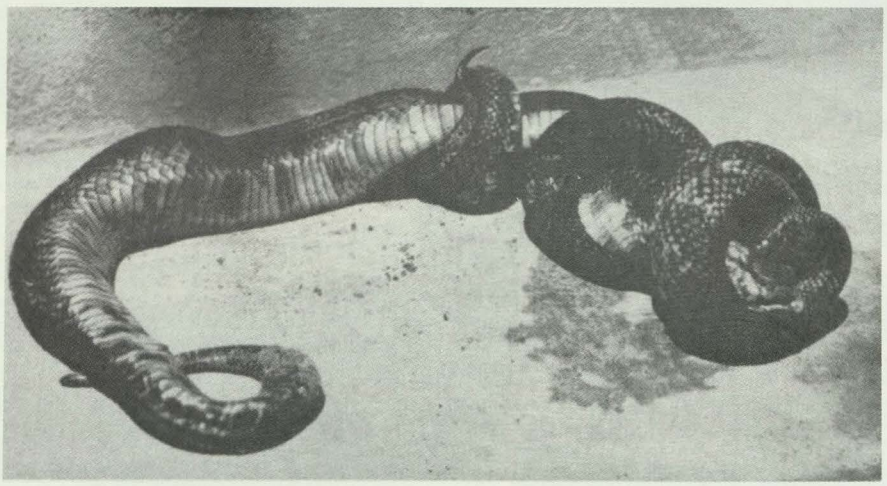
***Above:*** *Mrs. Kyle Anderson holds aloft a tidbit for her unusual pet, Herman the bouncing bass. Herman lives the life of Reilly swimming lazily in his private lily-padded pool in front of the Homosassa Spring Hotel.* ***Left:*** *A frog in the act of putting away a small rattlesnake.*



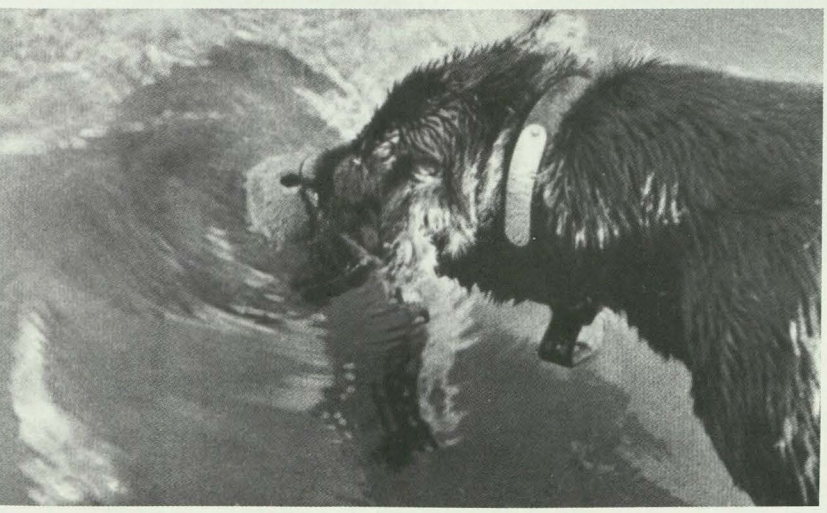
*Hatchery maintenance engineer Tommy Masters and chief fisheries biologist John F. Dequine examine the new self-aerating live fish truck recently bought by the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.*

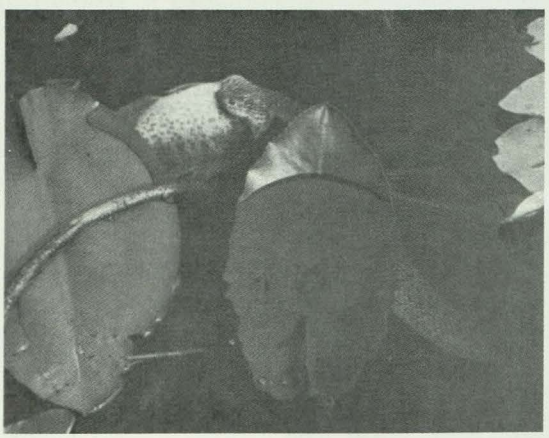
*When it comes to spring waterfowl family raising time, mamma mallard isn't particular about whose young'uns she takes care of. In addition to her own, there are a few muscovies (white) plus a variety of black ducks and even a fulvous tree duck.*

***Above:** This interaction between a spotted skunk and a panther took place during the filming of a documentary on animal defense mechanisms. **Below:** A kingsnake bites down on the head of a venomous cottonmouth.*



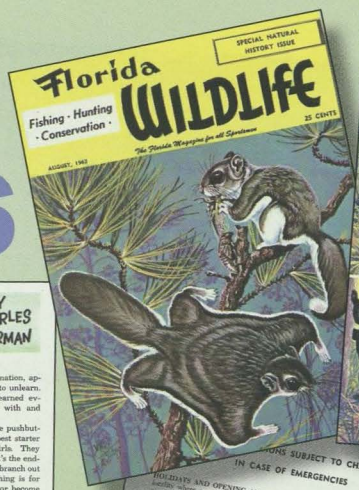
***Above:** Leffy Hayman of Citrus Park bagged a biological whatzit near Tampa. There was considerable speculation regarding its identity, until research revealed the beast was a capybara, the world's largest rodent and a of South American native. How it got to Florida is a mystery. **Below:** Curiosity got the better of these two as Penny, the Labrador and Felicity, the manatee, met nose-to-nose.*

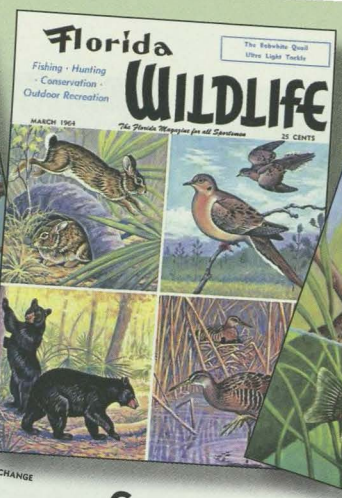




*In some animals, the eyes are definitely bigger than the stomach – or the throat. The green water snake has obviously bitten off more than it can "chew," even allowing for the anatomical fact that snakes' jaws and facial skin can stretch to an unusually great degree for feeding. This one was insistent on retaining its hold on the already-dead shellcracker.*

# Florida Wildlife the 60s



## FISHING

BY CHARLES WATERMAN

PATERNAL SPORTS FISHERMEN who want their progeny to follow in their muddy footsteps usually manage by one means or another to achieve exactly the opposite.

Father and son fishing teams aren't nearly as common as we're led to believe. These aren't all my ideas. I've asked a lot of people about it.

Generally, the failure is due to too much too soon or the opposite—too little too late.

A 6-year old who yells lustily to be taken along on an all-day fishing trip will have too much fishing too soon—long before lunch time in fact. When he starts throwing sinkers at turtles and doing juvenile calisthenics on a boat seat the old man will blow his stack and secretly swear never to let this piscatorial tragedy happen again.

Probably Pop will then go to the other extreme and Junior may have kids of his own before he gets another fishing invitation.

On the other hand, the fishing father who prefers the company of other adults may avoid his children from the beginning where fishing is concerned. If his youngsters ever take up fishing, it will be strictly on their own.

The right way seems to be the hard way.

step and sportier tackle will follow —if you really have a fisherman in the family. It never occurs to some parents that some youngsters don't give a dern about fishing and never will.

The other approach is to sell Junior on proficiency in the use of tackle. For most of us this is tough but the procedure is simple—teaching the kids to cast in the yard or at a casting club—or at a school where there is a casting course. Competitive casting appeals to many youngsters if there's some being done in the community. Generally there isn't.

Of course it's an exceptional case but take Bob Bodd, the former national casting champ. When I talk about competitive casting I always bring up Bob because I don't know many competitive casters.

Bob started teaching his daughter, Molly, to cast at an early age and she became a tournament champion.

Then, Bob went to work on his grandson, Terry, when Terry needed both hands for a light rod. Terry, too, became a casting champion. I don't think Molly has done a lot of fishing but she continued casting after Terry was big enough to hold his own. Terry is

matter of youthful coordination, aptitude and no bad habits to unlearn. Most of us grey-beards learned everything wrong to start with and never quite got over it.

Probably the closed-face pushbutton spinning reel is the best starter for small boys and girls. They needn't be led to believe it's the end-all in fishing and they can branch out as they grow up. Main thing is for them to either catch fish or become interesting in casting technique—or both.

Exposure to big fish at an early age can have unpredictable effects on youngsters.

Take the case of Ted Smallwood's family down at Everglades City.

Ted has been a fishing guide most of his life and he took Ted, Jr., fishing when the boy was quite small —took him for a Shark River trip on a cruiser. Most of us never get to afford such an outing no matter how much we like to fish.

Well, little Teddy wrestled big snook and tarpon until he was tired —and he never has cared much about fishing since. Fishing too good too soon?

I am very curious as to whether Smallwood's younger son, Allen, be-

es a serious fisherman. He has ned to fly cast with a very light and he's 10 years old. We had him g the other day and he hooked upon that might have gone 35 nds.

hen this event took place, Allen standing barefoot with a lot of fly line coiled around his feet. he fish took off with his little ser, Al went through maneu- that would do credit to a ad- dancer on a hot stove. The business got me in the funny- and I was rolling in the bottom boat before it was over. Any- the fish escaped (Al wouldn't

FLORIDA WILDLIFE

## YOUR GAME BIOLOGIST

By RICHARD HARLOW

Game Management Division
Florida Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission

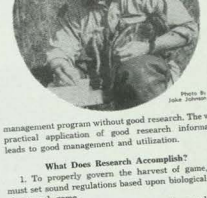


Photo By John Johnson

**What Is A Game Biologist?**

game biologist is a professional worker engaged e study of the origin, structure, functions and life ory of wild animals.

**What Does He Study?**

The game biologist may study wild mammals, birds, tiles, amphibians. He seeks accurate information out the rate of growth, reproduction, food habits, eases, environment, habitat, and the inter-relation- ips and inter-dependencies of such animals. He seeks know and record everything about wild animals.

**Why Does He Study?**

The truths that he learns and proves by careful research are applied to the management, regulation, development and harvest of wild animals. This is embodied in the word CONSERVATION—which is the preservation, restoration and wise use of the natural resources—in this case, the wild animal resource.

**Is Such Research Necessary?**

Yes. You cannot have a good, progressive wildlife management program without good research. The wise, practical application of good research information leads to good management and utilization.

**What Does Research Accomplish?**

1. To properly govern the harvest of game, you must set sound regulations based upon biological facts about such game.

2. Biological facts developed by good research help prevent the conservation agency from carrying out wasteful and expensive management practices and programs.

3. Good research continuously measures the effects of man's ever-changing influences on our natural resources. As human populations expand and grow, increasingly varied and heavy demands are placed upon the resources. Good research investigates the effects of these demands upon wildlife so that adequate management methods may be developed to maintain wildlife populations.

**How Are These Things Done?**

By careful, patient, persistent collection of facts

The real job of the Game Biologist is "the art" of making the land produce sustained annual populations of wild game for recreational use.

## General Regulations

1964-65 HUNTING SEASON
ALL DATES INCLUSIVE

IN CASE OF EMERGENCIES

HOLIDAYS AND OPENING AND CLOSING DAYS—During any season or in any counties where specified individual days of the week are closed to hunting for any game, such days shall be open on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. The Opening Day and the Closing Day for any species is always open for that species. Whenever Christmas Day or New Year's Day falls on a Sunday, the Monday immediately following such Sunday shall be open.

BEAR HUNTING—The bear is a game animal and may be taken only during the open season for taking of deer, and during managed bear hunts. No open season in Ocala National Forest.

WILD HOGS—Declared to game animals in specified Wildlife Management Areas, and in Palm Beach and Alachua counties. Wild hogs may be taken during the open season designated for each area. BAG LIMITS: ONE (1) Per Day, TWO (2) Per Season; Except FOUR (4) Per Season on Camp Blanding Management Area.

SEX EVIDENCE—Evidence of the sex, along with the heads, must remain on the carcasses of ALL DEER and TURKEY during the Open Season, while in camp or forest. DOES, or DOES with less than 3-inch antlers, taken during special "ANY DEER" Hunts, must be tagged by Hunt Official.

Shooting Hours

Resident Game—From one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Mourning Dove—From 12-noon to sunset.

Other Migratory Game—Waterfowl, Marsh Hen (rails and gallinules), Woodcock and Snipe, from sunrise until sunset.

Waterfowl Hunters

A Federal Migratory Waterfowl Hunting Stamp is required of all waterfowl hunters 16 years of age and older. Available at your local post office, at a cost of $1.00, the 1964-1965 Duck Stamp features Hawaii's Nene Geese. Your name must be signed across face of stamp before hunting.

LEGAL METHODS OF TAKING GAME—Shotguns not larger than 10-gauge; Rifles; Repeating Rifles; Long Bows; Pistols; Fish-type Spears must be plugged to three-shell capacity; Rifles and pistols prohibited when taking migratory game. Bows used for taking deer or bear must be capable of casting a one ounce hunting arrow 150 yards.

ALL HUNTERS must possess valid hunting licenses, except those persons under 15 years of age, and residents over 65 years of age. DUCK STAMPS also required of all persons 16 years of age and over when taking geese or ducks.

PURCHASE OF HUNTING LICENSE OR PERMIT constitutes acceptance by the purchaser of all provisions of or attached to such license or permit.

SIGN YOUR LICENSE—No license or permit is valid until countersigned by the licensee or permittee. Also sign your name across face of your duck stamp.

MIGRATORY SEASONS—Seasons for migratory game are set by the state within a framework established by the Federal agency which controls such birds, traveling seasons. Seasons are set so far as possible, to allow maximum hunting without disparage to basic game populations.

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Special Management Area Hunts
Preceding Page
26

## Florida's Wildlife Management Areas

A $5.00 Public Hunting Area Permit in addition to regular hunting license, is necessary to hunt on most Wildlife Management Areas. Such Permits are secured from any County Judge, or authorized sub-agent, in the state.

Special Hunt Permits, as outlined in the Management Area summaries, are required, in addition to regular hunting license, to hunt on Eglin Field, Cecil Webb and Citrus Wildlife Management Areas; and for special hog and archery hunts. Special hunt permits are obtained as listed in the summary.

Hunters must check in when entering and check out and report their kill when hunting, at designated checking stations on Wildlife Management Areas where such stations are maintained. On all other areas, hunters are requested to have their deer and turkey checked at the hunt headquarters.

1. Blackwater Wildlife Management Area, Santa Rosa and Okaloosa Counties, in two phases, November 21 to December 6, and December 19 to January 10. Turkey hunting during gobbler season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

2. Eglin Field Air Force Reservation, Santa Rosa and Okaloosa Counties, in two phases, November 21 to December 6, and December 19 to January 10. Turkey hunting during gobbler season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

3. Karl E. Grahn Wildlife Management Area, Okaloosa and Walton Counties, November 21 to December 6. Open to small game hunting only. Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

4. Apalachicola Wildlife Management Area, Calhoun, Bay and Gulf Counties, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

5. Liberty Wildlife Management Area, Jackson County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

6. Lake Talquin Wildlife Management Area, Leon and Gadsden Counties, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

7. Aucilla Wildlife Management Area, Jefferson, Taylor, and Wakulla Counties, November 14 to January 3. Special Turkey season during the first 7 days and the last 7 days between March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

8. Steinhatchee Wildlife Management Area, Dixie and Lafayette Counties, November 14 to January 3. Special Turkey season during the first 7 days and the last 7 days between March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

9. Osceola Wildlife Management Area, Osceola National Forest, Baker and Columbia Counties, November 14 to January 3. Special Turkey season during the first 7 days and the last 7 days between March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

10. Lake Butler Wildlife Management Area, Columbia, Baker and Union Counties, November 14 to January 3. Special Turkey season during the first 7 days and the last 7 days between March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

11. Gulf Hammock Wildlife Management Area, Levy County, November 14 to January 3. Special Turkey season during the first 7 days and the last 7 days between March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

12. Camp Blanding Wildlife Management Area, Clay County, November 14 to January 3. Special Turkey season during the first 7 days and the last 7 days between March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

13. Gainer River Wildlife Management Area, St. Johns County, November 14 to January 3. Special Turkey season during the first 7 days and the last 7 days between March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

14. Ocala Wildlife Management Area, Marion County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

15. Tenoroc Wildlife Management Area, Polk County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

16. Richloam Wildlife Management Area, Sumter County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

17. Withlacoochee Wildlife Management Area, Citrus, Hernando and Sumter Counties, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

18. Avon Park Wildlife Management Area, Highlands County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

19. Kissimmee Wildlife Management Area, Osceola County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

20. Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area, Osceola County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

21. Crill Jr. Wildlife Management Area, Osceola County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

22. Lee Wildlife Management Area, Osceola County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

23. Okaloosa Wildlife Management Area, Okaloosa County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

24. Fishtopsky Wildlife Management Area, Okaloosa County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

25. J. W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area, Palm Beach County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

26. Scott's Jamboree Wildlife Management Area, Lake County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

27. Everglades Wildlife Management Area, Dade County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

28. Arnold Wildlife Management Area, Bay County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

29. Ryan Wildlife Management Area, Bay County, November 21 to January 10. Special Turkey season, March 27 to April 11. Bear Hunting: Deer, Quail, Squirrel, Turkey.

FLORIDA WILDLIFE, SEPTEMBER,

## Wildlife Is Wealth

By JIM REED

Information Officer
Coastal Region

WHEN A TYPICAL FLORIDA FAMILY drives out to a nearby lake for a Saturday of fishing, or when a father and son and their dog set out for an afternoon of hunting, they have lots of company. Probably more than the average citizen of any other great modern nation, the average citizen enjoys sport fishing, hunting, and the great outdoors.

Fishing and hunting have always been part of America. When colonists first came to this continent the fish and game meant the difference between life and death. Then, men fished and hunted to feed their families. Today, long after they have ceased to be the basis of subsistence, fishing and hunting continue as an important part of our standard of living by providing recreation for thousands of Florida's sportsmen.

**What Is Wildlife?**

Wildlife is one of our many valuable natural resources. The term "wildlife" includes all species of undomesticated animals born to the wilderness, included are wild mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fresh and salt water fish, and invertebrates.

**Of What Value Is Wildlife?**

Wildlife has many tangible and intangible values. Esthetic, recreational, financial, educational, and others. Wildlife is a part of our American heritage.

**What Wildlife Is Found in Florida?**

There are many types, species, sub-species, and kinds of wildlife found in Florida. Fresh and saltwater fish, game animals, and non-game animals, game birds, non-game birds, and song birds, reptiles, amphibians

(Continued on Next Page)

Regular columns on hunting, fishing, shooting, boating, dogs and other outdoor activities were the backbone of the magazine. Providing Floridians expanded and improved recreational opportunities was a focus of the GFC.

Photo By Robertson Studio

Aerial view of the 740 acre (outlined) Saddle Creek Park. It is located about 1½-miles east of Lakeland on U. S. Highway 92.

Once considered wasteland, an old mine area has been developed into a special fishing park.

By FRED JONES

Two young anglerettes hurry to the park, a favor area for the youngsters.

Already many of the once-ugly acres of land, under the new cooperative industry-state reclamation program, are producing sleek, and dairy cattle, large golden crops of citrus better than average because of the residue of left in the ground, and beautiful residential with winding streets, often with "private lake most everyone's back or front yard.

And by the time this appears in print t gram will be producing some of the finest mana ing to be found in the United States. Under ment and management right now, solely for and other allied recreational uses, are more th acres of this former wasteland.

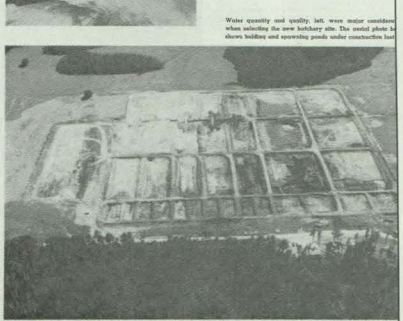
PHOTOS BY JIM HARDIE

## RICHLOAM FISH HATCHERY

Florida's newest facility for the improvement of fresh water fishing

Photos By A. D. Aldrich

Water quantity and quality, left, were major considera when selecting the new hatchery site. The aerial photo b shows holding and spawning ponds under construction last



24

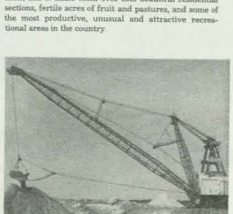
FLORIDA WILDLI

## Mines + Management = MORE FISHING

POLK AND EAST HILLSBOROUGH counties produce 72% of the phosphate mined in the United States and one-third of all that mined in the world. These mines produce employment directly for more than 6,000 people the year round, and indirectly furnish work for many more thousands. They contribute millions of dollars to the state's economy annually.

But of more importance to us, possibly, is the fact that these mines have produced some of the best bass fishing in the country ever since the first pit was dug back in the late 1800's. Probably because of the high disolved mineral content of the water, the mine fish grow large and rapidly. Under natural conditions, with no direct help from man or industry, the phosphate mines have become nationally famous spots for big fish of all fresh water species native to Central Florida—and oddly enough, produce some salt water species.

But a new day is dawning now for mine fishing. No longer will the fishing, as in the past, depend on the vagaries of nature. Man and industry are stepping in with a huge reclamation program designed to do away with the ugly wastelands left behind the mining operations, and to make them over into beautiful residential sections, fertile acres of fruit and pastures, and some of the most productive, unusual and attractive recreational areas in the country.



Family fishing excursions have become popul park, and all-day outings are a way of week

commissioners. The only strings attached to this valuable gift were that "It is to be developed for the use of all the public as a fishing and recreational area."

It is also unique in that it was a "wasteland" even before the mining operations started. Much of the phosphate in Polk and Hillsborough counties lies under already valuable land—groves, vegetable and pasture lands. The tearing up and making into a wasteland of this formerly productive ground sometimes causes much resentment against the industry.

(Continued on next page)

A. J. McClane of Palm Beach with 17 pound Peacock Bass, left, and an 8 pound Butterfly Bass, caught in South America.

Another import being studied as a possible Florida fresh water game fish

## PEACOCK BASS

By JIM HARDIE

FLORIDA FISHERMEN may gain an exciting new fresh water game fish if an experiment being conducted at two small ponds proves successful.

Tucunare or Peacock bass is the name of this new fish. It is native to the rivers of South America where it is prized as a food and game fish.

"The Peacock bass is every bit as aggressive as our largemouth bass when striking an artificial lure," said A. J. McClane, fishing editor of Field & Stream magazine.

McClane, who lives at Palm Beach, is an experienced Peacock bass fisherman.

"The Peacock bass is especially fond of surface lures," McClan said. "I have caught them up to 1 pounds."

The idea to introduce Peacoc bass to Florida waters originate at McClane's home about a ye ago. A group of sportsmen m informally to discuss the pros a cons of transplanting the So American fish.

Among those attending the g together at McClane's home w Frank Malcolm Roberts, who erates a tropical fish import business with headquarters Miami, and Lou Gainey, mana of the Game and Fresh W Fish Commission's Evergl Region.

Roberts pointed out that matic conditions and avai food in South American r where Peacock bass thrive similar to conditions four canals which criss-cross C and South Florida.

Despite enthusiasm ov potential of this South Am fish, Florida Game Comm officials wisely approach matter with caution.

"Before introducing a species of fish to our wat must be certain the new will not upset the desira ance of our native fish tions," said W. T. McB Miami, Commissioner Fourth District.

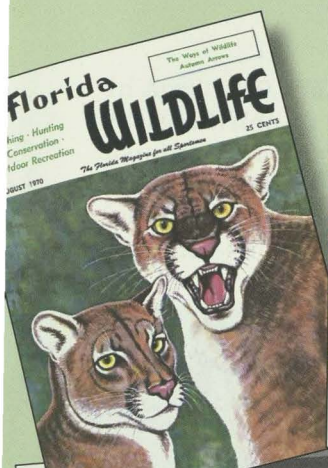
McBroom has follo progress of the Peacock ect from the beginning to make certain the bes of Florida fish and served," he said.

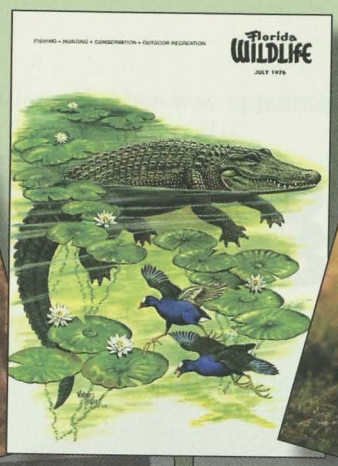
Malcolm Roberts supply fingerling Pea free for an experimen mine what, if any, might have on our nat

Roberts sent word cial fishermen in Per 500 fingerling Peacock fingerlings would co thousand to import.

Using seins, the P ermen went to wo streams near Iquito,

# Florida Wildlife the 70s



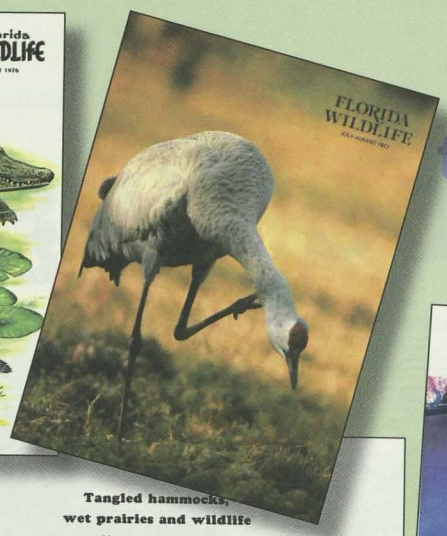



Photo By William Greer

perhaps it isn't too late to reverse the trend

## Florida's Fishing— Then and Now

BEFORE THE COMING OF THE WHITE MAN, Indians lived along the shores of Florida's great river systems for at least 2,000 years, and today hundreds of their shell mounds are visible along the margins.

One of the earliest accounts of Florida's fabulous freshwater fishery was written by John Bartram, a botanist from Philadelphia, during his trip up the St. Johns River, beginning in December 1765. His impressions of the lakes, streams, and springs noted during his search for the head of the river are worth repeating:

Lake Beresford h
mile wide and two or
is near south and no
narrow cypress swa
west side with pin
very rich, full of w
sides of the river, w
and near three fathc
. . . We came
Lake—*Ed.*) five or
A long tongue of l
east end, where a lo
course. We then ro
several islands, an
which runs in gent
sandy bottom, sh
and reeds stopped

## A Question Of Propriety

**Revision of the Florida Constitution is currently being considered. One of the matters before the revision panel is the constitutional status of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. The chief argument against the Commission is that it is different.**

**Why should this one agency have constitutional status which differs from all the others? The following seeks to give you the reasons.**

Which is the most important—people or fish (or, people or animals)?" This question has been asked of me dozens of times during the past thirty years. Much of the time it was asked as a put-down in the drawing of battle lines for some "people-wildlife" confrontation. Sometimes the question was asked seriously in an effort to understand this agency—the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission—that has so often defended wildlife or its environment seemingly at the

versus the public interest—but I am certain that twenty years from now the need for protecting wetlands will be as well understood and accepted as is today the need for protecting deer breeding stock.

For the past thirty-four years the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has taken the leadership in conservation matters. The record is filled with instances in which the Commission has been the first or *only* voice in state government speaking out and fighting for causes or positions which —while unpopular at the time—have proven to be

Commission undertook litigation
ion problem created by a citrus
n Polk County. The plant man-
ut of court to correct the situa-

Endangered Species

## WHY TRAP PELICANS?

### to the pelican snatcher in the midst of a raid, that may indeed be a good question

We were sitting around the table, full of fish and hushpuppies and getting pretty well oiled as the evening wore on. Everybody was swapping lies about rough days in the field and the stories were getting pretty outrageous.

In the midst of it all, Tommie Peoples launched into one of the most God-awful tales I'd ever heard, all about the horrors of pelican trapping.

I was chewing on a cold hushpuppy and must not've appeared sufficiently impressed or maybe I guffawed at a particularly lurid description of the innards of a pelican colony, I dunno . . . but before I had time to think about it, Tommie belched, leaned over the table, raised one eyebrow and invited me along on the annual pelican trapping expedition.

Honor bound, I accepted. *Fool.* It seemed like a great idea at the time.

That was in January. About the middle of April, I heard from Tommie again. Forget? Not Tommie. He said the pelican trapping would take place sometime in June.

Why trap pelicans? Good question.

Historically, brown pelicans were found all along the Gulf Coast, up the Atlantic into the Carolinas and beyond, and the Pacific Coast from California south. In the past decade or so, pesticide-laden runoff and other man-caused wastes have drastically reduced pelican populations in some areas.

In the delta region near the mouth of the Mississippi River, sudden die-offs have occurred, wiping out local pelican colonies. By the late 60's, Louisiana, the Pelican State, was left without pelicans.

In Florida, the big-billed birds have fared better. Whatever poisoned the upper Gulf Coast birds is not yet found in Florida waters in appreciable quantities. At this time, the threat to Florida brown pelicans is mostly due to loss of habitat as the coastline is developed. Due to this threat and the die-offs in other areas, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has listed the brown pelican as "Endangered."

In areas where rookeries are protected from waterfront development, Florida brown pelicans are doing fine. They're doing well enough, in fact, that a healthy colony can easily recover if a hundred fledglings are removed.

You guessed it. Young Florida birds are trapped each year and transported to Louisiana to re-establish pelican colonies there.

Each season since 1968, the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, working closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, has trapped pelicans and shipped them to Louisiana to re-establish a population there. As Florida's wildlife agency, the Commission is responsible for the program, except for the actual transfer and release of the birds.

Of course, a primary consideration in re-establishing Louisiana's pelicans is to *not* endanger the Florida population in the process.

Each year, surveys are made which help determine whether brown pelicans are declining, increasing or holding their own in Florida. In addition, a U.S. Department of the Interior-sponsored "Recovery Team" has been formed to determine the habitat which is critical to the survival of the brown pelican. Two members of the recovery team,

*(continued on next page)*

**By Michael Miller**



**Tangled hammocks, wet prairies and wildlife fill the mind's eye of Okeechobee artist**

## ROBERT BUTLER

**BY MIKE GODWIN**

The first thing a discerning visitor notices about Robert Butler is his hands. Long, sensitive fingers taper downward from lean, carefully crafted palms. With those hands, the 34-year-old Okeechobee City man has painted his boyhood memories into reality as one of the South's fastest rising outdoor artists.

"It was a sort of natural choice for me because I've rambled in the woods since I first could get out-of-doors," recalled Butler in his quiet, cool gallery.

Leaning back in a decorative wrought iron chair, he said, "I used to go swimming or hiking just about any time I could get away from home. So the landscapes here have always been close to me." Dressed in a faded work shirt, jeans and boots, Butler is still a student of his south Florida world.

And his first successes as a painter were won recreating this vast region of tangled hammocks and wet, grassy prairies encircling the great shallow-bottomed bowl called Lake Okeechobee.

MAXCY CAMP

"So I took the painting around town and asked if anyone wanted to buy it. Someone did. I quickly sold it for $15 and found out then and there that people do like wildlife art," he said.

"So I started to do more wildlife. Different types of ducks," he remarked, getting up from his chair in the gallery's lobby. The walls were lined from a show the week before with scenes including waterfowl winging their way home at sunset and bucks about to leap into flight from their tidal creek hiding place.

"From those experiences, what I am as an artist

*(continued on page 30)*

FLORIDA WILDLIFE

The magazine featured stories about conserving Florida's species while still providing ample recreational opportunities in the face of a fast-growing human population.

Photo by James Brady

## Wildlife Detectives On The Job

In the last few years, there have been tremendous advances in the field of forensics, a science that deals with the application of medical facts to crime detection. While wildlife officers of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission have traditionally utilized the laboratory services of the FBI and the Florida Department of Criminal Law Enforcement for evidence analysis, it is only recently that we began to develop independent capabilities in this area.

Due to the ever increasing workload at most crime laboratory facilities, turnaround time for evidence submitted for analysis has become excessive. For example, almost six weeks is required for the FBI laboratory in Washington to determine the species origin of blood and tissue samples. This lengthy turnover time adversely affects our enforcement efforts due to court delays, difficulties in maintaining the "chain" of evidence custody, plus expenses incurred when it was necessary for the analyst to appear and testify as an expert witness in criminal proceedings.

The need for an accelerated method of testing samples of blood and tissue was evident, particularly with various violations involving illegal taking and commercialization of deer and alligators. It is said that "necessity is the mother of invention" and, with that thought in mind, our Division of Law Enforcement began to seriously search for alternative methods of evidence evaluation.

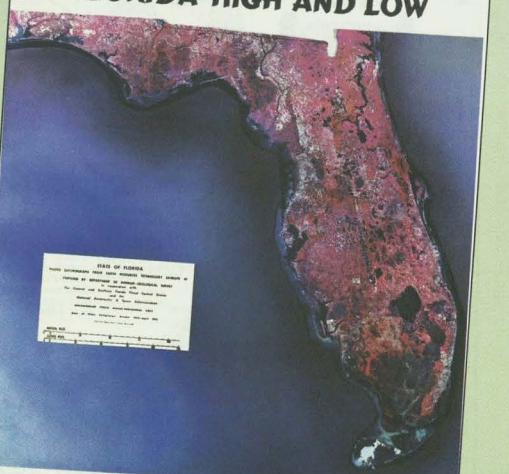
The first step was a specialized school for wildlife inspectors and investigators held at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Dr. Parker Small, one of the foremost immunologists in the world, taught a course in "Ouchterlony analysis" to the 25 officers, which gave them the capability of field testing blood and tissue samples. Using proper procedures and a minimum of equipment, positive identification of blood and tissue can be obtained within a 24-hour period. The basis of this examination is related to how man and other animals defend themselves against disease and invasion of foreign substances (i.e., immunology). Equipped with their new knowledge and "Ouchterlony analysis kits," these officers began to prove the value of the testing procedure almost immediately. Consider the following cases:

**CASE NUMBER 1**

An informant observed a subject with an antlerless deer during the closed season. The subject forced the informer to leave the scene at gunpoint until the deer was moved away from the area. Wildlife investigators returned to the scene with the informer and obtained one drop of dried blood



## FLORIDA HIGH AND LOW






*You are looking at fragile Florida from 500 miles in space, as seen by the cameras of Earth Resources Technology Satellite 1 (ERTS-1), launched in July 1972 to aid foresters, fish and wildlife managers, geologists, hydrologists, cartographers, oceanographers, agricultural scientists, and others in solving down-to-earth problems. Vegetation shows as red and pink, water as black and blue, and concrete and asphalt as white. Remote sensing from space has already proven its worth, and scientists are confident that detailed inventorying of land and water by satellite will aid in discovering and heading off future environmental problems. Florida has 54,130 sq. mi. of land and 8½ million people—nearly 2½ million of whom reside in Dade and Broward counties. The following pages are some closer looks at a few of the habitat features*

MAY 1974

FISHING

### A Painful Decision

**we've made some great strides in learning the whys and wherefores of outwitting fish—it's likely that we've even gone too far**

By CHARLES WATERMAN

FOR A LONG TIME we have been worrying about there being too many fishermen. Now we are worrying about their being too good. Too many fishermen that are too good can change the whole picture in a hurry.

As science and persistence snoop deeper and deeper into fish privacy it stands to reason that the fishermen are going to win in the end. After all, we are smarter than fish and now that we've really put our minds to it the game is getting pretty one-sided.

From the time Izaac Walton dunked worms for English trout until the boys came home from World War II there hadn't been much real advancement in fish *catching* methods. Oh, the rods, reels and lures had gotten better all right but there didn't seem to be much that was really new. We hadn't really learned much about sport fishing in the past 200 years.

Spinning tackle came along and made fishing more democratic because it was easier to learn than other gear. Some said it should be outlawed because we finally had a method that would clean out all the lakes and rivers. I was told in all seriousness that it was the end of the line for plugcasting, fly-fishing and even trolling.

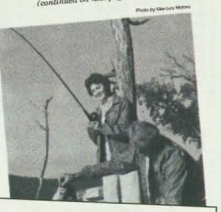
Then came the heretical revelation that the black bass weren't all living along the shorelines. Most of them, the new prophets revealed, were sort of bunched up and lying around near the bottom and if you'd troll deep and fast you'd find where they were and you could then use any kind of tackle you chose. Some of us old mossbacks said we didn't want to do that kind of fishing. We'd still beat the [illegible] did but we didn't catch as many fish

Spinning tackle, coupled to small jigs, produced a new ball game for saltwater fish and some of the most scientific operators of all use jigs, which have been developed in many directions. For thousands of years people had been jigging doodads up and down for fish but all of a sudden there were bookfuls of new jigging methods and all of them worked.

But the study of fish began to snowball and in the past 10 years we may have come farther than we did in the 10,000 years before that. Depthfinders were nothing new but when they began to use them on fresh water they developed fast. No use wasting your time with the new science of structure study and all that stuff because it's recorded in hundreds of books, thousands of feet of motion picture film and endless hours of lectures.

*(continued on next page)*

Photo by Mercury Motors



## JAGUARONDI

**By Wilfred T. Neill**

Some years ago, in the pages of FLORIDA WILDLIFE, I wrote about the jaguarondi—a long-tailed black cat that had lately turned up in our state. Now it's time to take another look at this animal, to review its current status in Florida.

When full grown, the jaguarondi is about twice the size of an ordinary housecat. It is short-legged and long-tailed, with a rounded, kitten-like head. Jaguarondis come in two color phases, one of them a rich reddish, the other a dark grayish. The red phase, sometimes called the eyra, has not been seen in Florida. Gray specimens, glimpsed at night or in thick brush, look quite black, and the sighting of them has often given rise to "black panther" reports.

As far back as the early 1950s, my interest was aroused by such reports, especially those that came from qualified observers. From verbal accounts and newspaper articles, it was evident that some people really had seen a slinky, cat-like animal with a long tail. Sightings seemed to cluster in the Ocala National Forest, Marion County; along the Gulf coast from Taylor through Levy County; in Hillsborough County; and in extreme southern Florida. There were, however, a few sightings at other points in the state.

One night in 1961, Randy Smith and I were driving through the Big Scrub country of the Ocala National Forest, an area from which several convincing jaguarondi reports had come. One of these cats suddenly crossed the highway in our headlights. We had been collecting reptiles, and were wearing headlamps and heavy boots. We jumped out of the jeep and chased the animal through the scrubby underbrush. Every time we got close to it, it would turn, face us, open its mouth to the widest, and give out with a sneeze-like hiss. Such actions are very characteristic of the jaguarondi. True, most wild members of the cat family will snarl and spit when molested; but the jaguarondi somehow manages to make the most threatening grimace, and to hiss as sharply as a striking snake.

This particular specimen escaped under a barbwire fence. Nevertheless, I was firmly convinced that the jaguarondi did indeed inhabit our state; for I was already familiar with this cat in its native homeland of Mexico and Central America. There was no mistaking the identity of the Big Scrub animal, and I decided to investigate the matter more fully.

In any sort of biological investigation, it's wise to begin with a search through the appropriate wildlife magazines and technical journals; for someone might already have published some information bearing on your problem. And as it happened, I discovered a useful article in FLORIDA GAME AND FISH, the magazine that later become FLORIDA WILDLIFE. In the June, 1942, issue of FLORIDA GAME AND FISH, A. Hyatt Verrill reported several encounters with an animal that was almost surely the jaguarondi. Interestingly, these encounters had taken place in areas from which I had accumulated some believable records of a long-tailed black cat.

When I first began trailing the jaguarondi in Florida, I was directing a research project sponsored by the well-known naturalist Ross Allen. For years, Ross had subscribed to a clipping service that covered the state, and that provided him with copies of all newspaper articles about wildlife. Searching through his clipping files, I discovered several more convincing reports of jaguarondis.

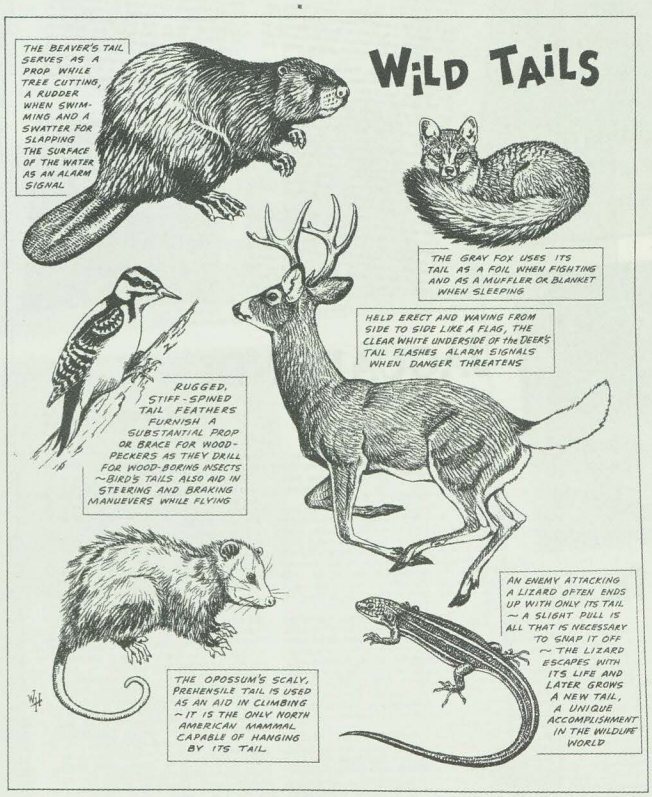
At that time I was also writing and drawing a weekly series called "Creatures of the Wild", which ran in about 120 Florida newspapers. One week I featured the jaguarondi, with remarks about its possible presence in Florida; and quite a few people wrote in to say that they had seen the animal. To judge from the letters, some of the correspondents had actually seen housecats, stray dogs, otters, bob-

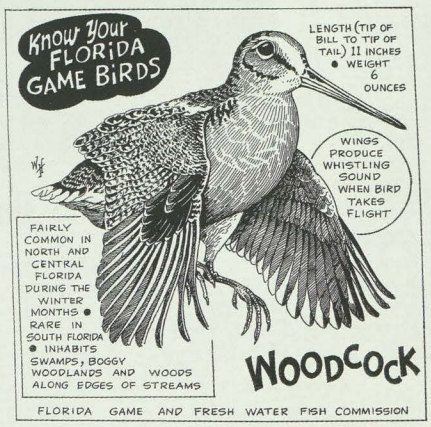
*(continued on next page)*

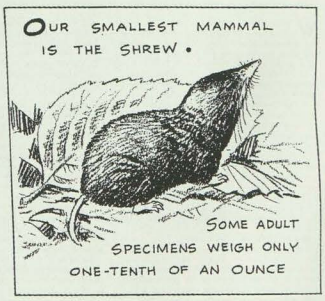
*Florida Wildlife*

# Wallace Hughes

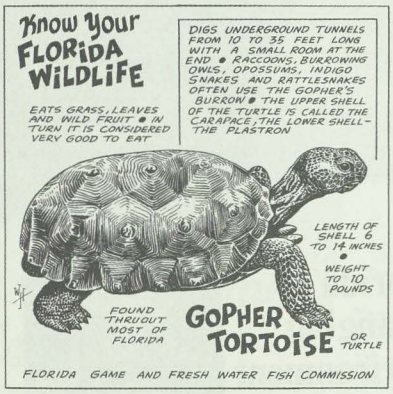
WILD EYES
GREAT HORNED OWL
BALD EAGLE
ASK ANY PILOT—SUPERIOR EYESIGHT IS NECESSARY FOR SAFE FLIGHT—BIRDS CAN SEE ABOUT EIGHT TIMES BETTER THAN HUMANS—THEIR EYES FUNCTION LIKE A COMBINATION MAGNIFYING GLASS AND TELESCOPE ALLOWING SUPERIOR CLOSEUP & DISTANT VIEWING — MOST BIRDS ALSO HAVE A COMBINED BINOCULAR-MONOCULAR FIELD OF VISION ENABLING THEM TO SEE IN ALL DIRECTIONS—THE OWL HAS ONLY BINOCULAR SIGHT (LIKE MAN)—TO SEE TO THE SIDE OR BEHIND IT MUST TURN ITS HEAD — A TRANSPARENT "THIRD EYELID," CALLED THE NICTITANS, PROTECTS THE BIRD'S EYES FROM THE HAZARDS OF FLYING AND LANDING & KEEPS THE EYE MOIST AND CLEAN WHILE STILL ALLOWING THE BIRD TO SEE!
ANIMALS THAT ARE ACTIVE BOTH DAY & NIGHT, LIKE THE CATS, OFTEN HAVE ELLIPTICAL OR SLIT-SHAPED PUPILS — MERE SLITS IN BRIGHT LIGHT THEY OPEN UP LARGE & ROUND FOR DIM LIGHT VISION— A SPECIAL REFLECTING SURFACE BEHIND THE RETINA (ABSENT IN MAN) ENABLES ANIMALS TO SEE IN THE DARK—THIS REFLECTOR CAUSES ANIMAL'S EYES TO GLOW AT NIGHT WHEN CAUGHT IN A BEAM OF LIGHT
BOBCAT
THREATENED BY MANY ENEMIES, THE BULGING EYES OF THE COTTONTAIL CAN SEE IN ALL DIRECTIONS — FRONT, SIDE & BEHIND
WITHOUT EYELIDS, THE EYES OF THE SNAKE ARE PROTECTED BY TRANSPARENT SHIELDS WHICH ARE PART OF THE SKIN—WHEN THE SNAKE SHEDS ITS SKIN, WHICH MAY BE SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR, IT SHEDS ITS EYE SHIELDS
RAT SNAKE
— FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION

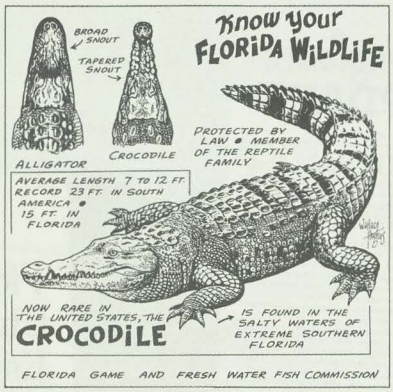

WILD TAILS
THE BEAVER'S TAIL SERVES AS A PROP WHILE TREE CUTTING, A RUDDER WHEN SWIMMING AND A SWATTER FOR SLAPPING THE SURFACE OF THE WATER AS AN ALARM SIGNAL
THE GRAY FOX USES ITS TAIL AS A FOIL WHEN FIGHTING AND AS A MUFFLER OR BLANKET WHEN SLEEPING
HELD ERECT AND WAVING FROM SIDE TO SIDE LIKE A FLAG, THE CLEAR WHITE UNDERSIDE of the DEER'S TAIL FLASHES ALARM SIGNALS WHEN DANGER THREATENS
RUGGED, STIFF-SPINED TAIL FEATHERS FURNISH A SUBSTANTIAL PROP OR BRACE FOR WOODPECKERS AS THEY DRILL FOR WOOD-BORING INSECTS — BIRD'S TAILS ALSO AID IN STEERING AND BRAKING MANUEVERS WHILE FLYING
AN ENEMY ATTACKING A LIZARD OFTEN ENDS UP WITH ONLY ITS TAIL — A SLIGHT PULL IS ALL THAT IS NECESSARY TO SNAP IT OFF — THE LIZARD ESCAPES WITH ITS LIFE AND LATER GROWS A NEW TAIL, A UNIQUE ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THE WILDLIFE WORLD
THE OPOSSUM'S SCALY, PREHENSILE TAIL IS USED AS AN AID IN CLIMBING — IT IS THE ONLY NORTH AMERICAN MAMMAL CAPABLE OF HANGING BY ITS TAIL

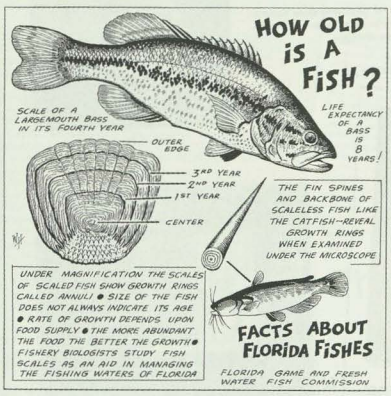

KNOW YOUR FLORIDA GAME BIRDS
LENGTH (TIP OF BILL TO TIP OF TAIL) 11 INCHES • WEIGHT 6 OUNCES
WINGS PRODUCE WHISTLING SOUND WHEN BIRD TAKES FLIGHT
FAIRLY COMMON IN NORTH AND CENTRAL FLORIDA DURING THE WINTER MONTHS • RARE IN SOUTH FLORIDA • INHABITS SWAMPS, BOGGY WOODLANDS AND WOODS ALONG EDGES OF STREAMS
WOODCOCK
FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION

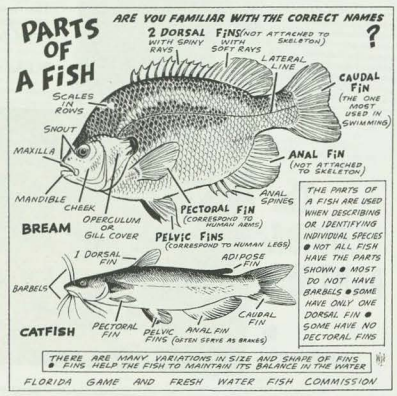


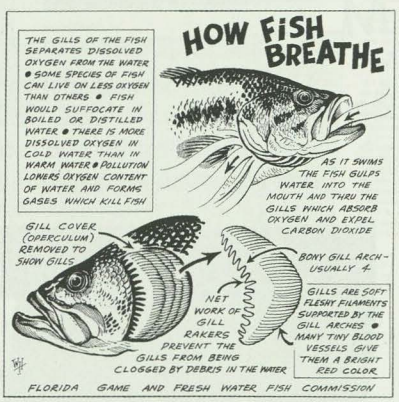
In April 1959, Wallace Hughes was appointed *Florida Wildlife's* first art editor. His paintings graced many of the magazine's covers during the 1960s and 1970s. He also introduced the extremely popular "Florida Wildlife Scrapbook" series.

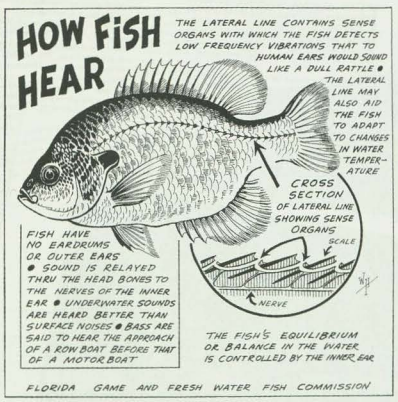

Know Your FLORIDA WILDLIFE
DIGS UNDERGROUND TUNNELS FROM 10 TO 35 FEET LONG WITH A SMALL ROOM AT THE END • RACCOONS, BURROWING OWLS, OPOSSUMS, INDIGO SNAKES AND RATTLESNAKES OFTEN USE THE GOPHER'S BURROW • THE UPPER SHELL OF THE TURTLE IS CALLED THE CARAPACE; THE LOWER SHELL - THE PLASTRON
EATS GRASS, LEAVES AND WILD FRUIT • IN TURN IT IS CONSIDERED VERY GOOD TO EAT
LENGTH OF SHELL 6 TO 14 INCHES • WEIGHT TO 10 POUNDS
FOUND THRUOUT MOST OF FLORIDA
GOPHER TORTOISE OR TURTLE
FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION

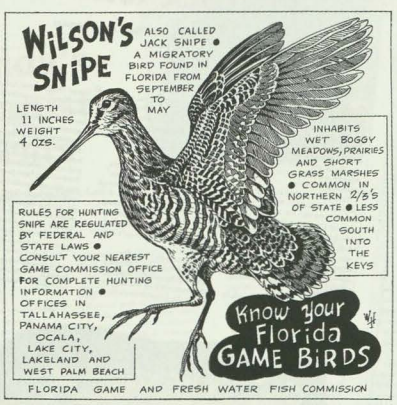

Know Your FLORIDA WILDLIFE
BROAD SNOUT
TAPERED SNOUT
ALLIGATOR
CROCODILE
PROTECTED BY LAW • MEMBER OF THE REPTILE FAMILY
AVERAGE LENGTH 7 TO 12 FT. RECORD 23 FT. IN SOUTH AMERICA • 15 FT. IN FLORIDA
NOW RARE IN THE UNITED STATES, THE CROCODILE
IS FOUND IN THE SALTY WATERS OF EXTREME SOUTHERN FLORIDA
FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION

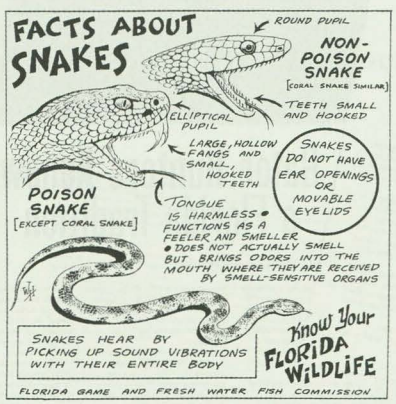

HOW OLD IS A FISH?
SCALE OF A LARGEMOUTH BASS IN ITS FOURTH YEAR
LIFE EXPECTANCY OF A BASS IS 8 YEARS!
OUTER EDGE
3RD YEAR
2ND YEAR
1ST YEAR
CENTER
THE FIN SPINES AND BACKBONE OF SCALELESS FISH LIKE THE CATFISH-REVEAL GROWTH RINGS WHEN EXAMINED UNDER THE MICROSCOPE
UNDER MAGNIFICATION THE SCALES OF SCALED FISH SHOW GROWTH RINGS CALLED ANNULI • SIZE OF THE FISH DOES NOT ALWAYS INDICATE ITS AGE • RATE OF GROWTH DEPENDS UPON FOOD SUPPLY • THE MORE ABUNDANT THE FOOD THE BETTER THE GROWTH • FISHERY BIOLOGISTS STUDY FISH SCALES AS AN AID IN MANAGING THE FISHING WATERS OF FLORIDA
FACTS ABOUT FLORIDA FISHES
FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION

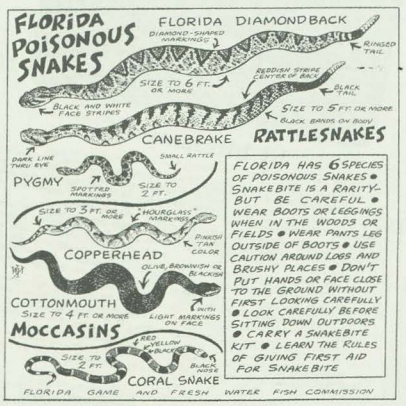

PARTS OF A FISH
ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH THE CORRECT NAMES ?
2 DORSAL FINS (NOT ATTACHED TO SKELETON) WITH SPINY RAYS
WITH SOFT RAYS
LATERAL LINE
CAUDAL FIN (THE ONE MOST USED IN SWIMMING)
SCALES IN RINGS
SNOUT
MAXILLA
ANAL FIN (NOT ATTACHED TO SKELETON)
MANDIBLE
CHEEK
OPERCULUM OR GILL COVER
ANAL SPINES
PECTORAL FIN (CORRESPOND TO HUMAN ARMS)
BREAM
PELVIC FINS (CORRESPOND TO HUMAN LEGS)
ADIPOSE FIN
1 DORSAL FIN
BARBELS
CATFISH
PECTORAL FIN
PELVIC FINS (OFTEN SERVE AS BRACES)
ANAL FIN
CAUDAL FIN
THE PARTS OF A FISH ARE USED WHEN DESCRIBING OR IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL SPECIES • NOT ALL FISH HAVE THE PARTS SHOWN • MOST DO NOT HAVE BARBELS • SOME HAVE ONLY ONE DORSAL FIN • SOME HAVE NO PECTORAL FINS
THERE ARE MANY VARIATIONS IN SIZE AND SHAPE OF FINS • FINS HELP THE FISH TO MAINTAIN ITS BALANCE IN THE WATER
FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION


HOW FISH BREATHE
THE GILLS OF THE FISH SEPARATES DISSOLVED OXYGEN FROM THE WATER • SOME SPECIES OF FISH CAN LIVE ON LESS OXYGEN THAN OTHERS • FISH WOULD SUFFOCATE IN BOILED OR DISTILLED WATER • THERE IS MORE DISSOLVED OXYGEN IN COLD WATER THAN IN WARM WATER • POLLUTION LOWERS OXYGEN CONTENT OF WATER AND FORMS GASES WHICH KILL FISH
AS IT SWIMS THE FISH GULPS WATER INTO THE MOUTH AND THRU THE GILLS WHICH ABSORB OXYGEN AND EXPEL CARBON DIOXIDE
GILL COVER (OPERCULUM) REMOVED TO SHOW GILLS
BONY GILL ARCH - USUALLY 4
NET WORK OF GILL RAKERS PREVENT THE GILLS FROM BEING CLOGGED BY DEBRIS IN THE WATER
GILLS ARE SOFT FLESHY FILAMENTS SUPPORTED BY THE GILL ARCHES • MANY TINY BLOOD VESSELS GIVE THEM A REDDISH RED COLOR
FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION

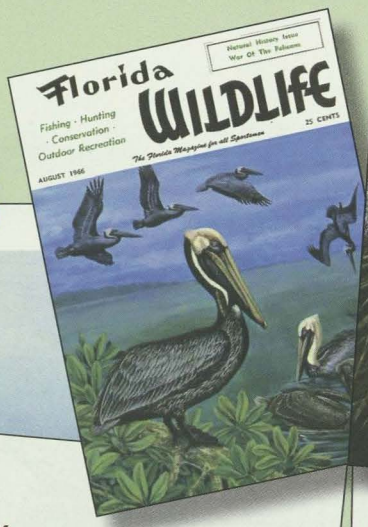

HOW FISH HEAR
THE LATERAL LINE CONTAINS SENSE ORGANS WITH WHICH THE FISH DETECTS LOW FREQUENCY VIBRATIONS THAT TO HUMAN EARS WOULD SOUND LIKE A DULL RATTLE • THE LATERAL LINE MAY ALSO AID THE FISH TO ADAPT TO CHANGES IN WATER TEMPERATURE
CROSS SECTION OF LATERAL LINE SHOWING SENSE ORGANS
SCALE
NERVE
FISH HAVE NO EARDRUMS OR OUTER EARS • SOUND IS RELAYED THRU THE HEAD BONES TO THE NERVES OF THE INNER EAR • UNDERWATER SOUNDS ARE HEARD BETTER THAN SURFACE NOISES • BASS ARE SAID TO HEAR THE APPROACH OF A ROW BOAT BEFORE THAT OF A MOTOR BOAT
THE FISH'S EQUILIBRIUM OR BALANCE IN THE WATER IS CONTROLLED BY THE INNER EAR
FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION


WILSON'S SNIPE
ALSO CALLED JACK SNIPE • A MIGRATORY BIRD FOUND IN FLORIDA FROM SEPTEMBER TO MAY
LENGTH 11 INCHES WEIGHT 4 OZS.
INHABITS WET BOGGY MEADOWS, PRAIRIES AND SHORT GRASS MARSHES • COMMON IN NORTHERN 2/3'S OF STATE • LESS COMMON SOUTH INTO THE KEYS
RULES FOR HUNTING SNIPE ARE REGULATED BY FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS • CONSULT YOUR NEAREST GAME COMMISSION OFFICE FOR COMPLETE HUNTING INFORMATION • OFFICES IN TALLAHASSEE, PANAMA CITY, OCALA, LAKE CITY, LAKELAND AND WEST PALM BEACH
Know Your Florida GAME BIRDS
FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION


FACTS ABOUT SNAKES
ROUND PUPIL
NON-POISON SNAKE
[CORAL SNAKE SIMILAR]
TEETH SMALL AND HOOKED
ELLIPTICAL PUPIL
LARGE, HOLLOW FANGS AND SMALL HOOKED TEETH
SNAKES DO NOT HAVE EAR OPENINGS OR MOVABLE EYE LIDS
POISON SNAKE
[EXCEPT CORAL SNAKE]
TONGUE IS HARMLESS • FUNCTIONS AS A FEELER AND SMELLER • DOES NOT ACTUALLY SMELL BUT BRINGS ODORS INTO THE MOUTH WHERE THEY ARE RECEIVED BY SMELL-SENSITIVE ORGANS
SNAKES HEAR BY PICKING UP SOUND VIBRATIONS WITH THEIR ENTIRE BODY
Know Your FLORIDA WILDLIFE
FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION


FLORIDA POISONOUS SNAKES
FLORIDA DIAMONDBACK
DIAMOND-SHAPED MARKINGS
RINGED TAIL
SIZE TO 6 FT. OR MORE
REDDISH STRIPE CENTER OF BAR
BLACK TAIL
BLACK AND WHITE FACE STRIPES
SIZE TO 5 FT. OR MORE
BLACK BANDS ON BODY
CANEBRAKE RATTLESNAKES
DARK LINE THRU EYE
SMALL RATTLE
PYGMY
SPOTTED MARKINGS
SIZE TO 2 FT.
SIZE TO 5 FT. OR MORE
HOURGLASS MARKINGS
DISTINCT TAN COLOR
COPPERHEAD
OLIVE, BROWNISH OR REDDISH
COTTONMOUTH
SIZE TO 4 FT. OR MORE
WHITE LIGHT MARKINGS ON FACE
MOCCASINS
RED YELLOW BLACK
SIZE TO 2 FT.
BLACK NOSE
CORAL SNAKE
FLORIDA HAS 6 SPECIES OF POISONOUS SNAKES • SNAKEBITE IS A RARITY - BUT BE CAREFUL • WEAR BOOTS OR LEGGINGS WHEN IN THE WOODS OR FIELDS • WEAR PANTS LEGS OUTSIDE OF BOOTS • USE CAUTION AROUND LOGS AND BRUSHY PLACES • DON'T PUT HANDS OR FACE CLOSE TO THE GROUND WITHOUT FIRST LOOKING CAREFULLY • LOOK CAREFULLY BEFORE SITTING DOWN OUTDOORS • CARRY A SNAKEBITE KIT • LEARN THE RULES OF GIVING FIRST AID FOR SNAKEBITE
FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION

# Florida Wildlife the 80s



## Everglades UPDATE

By Vic Heller
Assistant Chief, Bureau of Wildlife Land Management

*It has been a year and a half since the Everglades deer crisis of July 1982. Most of the rumbling over the controversial emergency deer hunt in the east Everglades marsh has died down. However, controversy has for many years been closely associated with the Everglades and the decisions that mold its future.*

Looking back over the past year, we can see both good and bad resulting from the controversy. The issue polarized many groups, primarily because of basic differences in philosophies. On the other hand, the deer controversy spawned some positive action by causing an unprecedented level of public attention to be focused on the Everglades, its problems and its uncertain future.

Once emotionalism over the hunt subsided, the most basic problems affecting the Everglades—its wildlife and habitat—began to receive more attention. As a result of the public and governmental interest in the critical problems in the Everglades, positive action has been taken to remedy or improve some of the problems.

On August 4, 1982, Governor Bob Graham appointed an Everglades Wildlife Management Committee to study the problems facing the Everglades and to make recommendations for improvement. The committee, including heads and staff members of agencies involved in resources management in the Everglades, studied the problems and presented its recommendations at a public hearing in February. After receiving public comment



## Florida's Changing Environment

**The views of two long-time conservationists who have seen and been a part of those changes.**

By John Waters Jr.

Fred W. Stanberry

## Recycle Your Bass

**A Guide To Handling And Releasing**

By Phil Chapman

Catch and release bass fishing, a concept practically unheard of scarcely a decade ago, is catching on. Not long ago an angler's level of expertise was often measured in pounds of fillets. Photographs displaying huge strings of bass were frequently featured on the sports pages of newspapers and fishing magazines. But today, the attitude of many bass fishermen is changing. Releasing all, or a large part, of our catch is common as more and more fishermen become conservation-conscious.

The largemouth black bass reigns as king in most of Florida's three million acres of fresh water lakes, ponds and streams. The species is amazingly resilient and able to survive intense pressure and high technology fishing methods. However, biologists face a constantly growing challenge to manage this renewable bass resource. With the influx of thousands of visitors and new residents annually, it is inevitable that demands to maintain quality bass fisheries will only increase.

The threat of overfishing, once thought to be an impossibility, could become reality without adequate concern for bass populations. If Florida's waters are overfished, catch rates may decline, as well as the average size of the catch or numbers of trophy bass available to fishermen. Although high catch rates are an important priority, some anglers place even



## The Weed Eater

In the face of an ever-growing aquatic weed problem in Florida, the grass carp has received considerable attention during recent years. Concern that experimental fish might escape and become established as a breeding population in the wild, as it has in the Mississippi River, possibly to the detriment of the aquatic habitat, somewhat tempered enthusiasm of the Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission over the weed control potential of the species.

The agency's attention has recently been focused on the so-called triploid grass carp, a hybrid resulting from crossing grass carp and bighead carp. In addition to the grass carp's characteristic weed-eating habits, the triploid cross is genetically unable to reproduce.

This hybrid was first introduced into Florida by the Commission during the summer of 1979. The initial shipment was obtained from a commercial facility, Malone's Fish Hatchery in Arkansas, as were subsequent stocks.

In the light of substantial public interest in the matter, it seems appropriate that a progress report be presented.

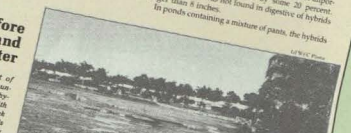
Experiments in laboratory pools and hatchery ponds show that the hybrid fingerlings change from a diet of animal material to vegetation by the time they reach a length of 4 to 6 inches. In the experimental ponds where there was a mixture of aquatic growth, filamentous algae, chara, and submersed aquatics eaten by the smaller hybrids. By the time they reached 10 inches in length, they were feeding avidly on hydrilla, the major plant pest with which we are currently concerned in this program.

Examination of over 100 hybrids from our lake studies revealed 80 percent had fed exclusively on hydrilla. Filamentous algae was the next most important food item, being taken by some 20 percent. Animal matter was not found in digestive of hybrids larger than 8 inches.

In ponds containing a mixture of plants, the hybrids

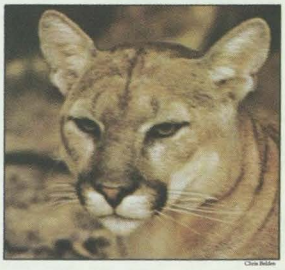
### Before and After

More than 93 percent of Lake Dianne, Pasco County, was covered with hydrilla. Treatment with herbicide knocked back lush growth and hybrids finished off the pesky weed within 90 days, as shown in these before and after photos.



## The FLORIDA PANTHER

By Morrie Naggiar



Chris Belden

By an overwhelming majority, the schoolchildren of the state named the Florida panther as their choice for the state animal. The mandate was recognized when, on March 19, 1982, Governor Bob Graham signed the bill that made it official: the panther is now the state animal of Florida.

What is this creature that has so captivated the imagination of Florida youngsters that it could win out over such highly touted competition as the manatee and the alligator?

A large-sized member of the cat family, *Felidae*, the panther, *Felis concolor*, once ranged over much of the United States north into Canada and through Mexico

Considered characteristic of this subspecies are three distinct physical features. First is the tail which has a right angle bend in the last vertebra, giving a distinctive kink to the end of the appendage. Second is a whorl of hair—a "cowlick"—in the middle of the back. Third is the irregular white flecking on the head, neck and shoulders. This spotting has been noted in other subspecies but is much more prevalent in the Florida panther.

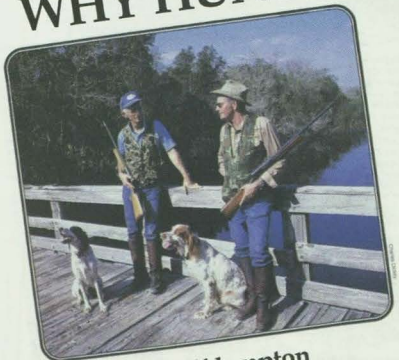
A mature male Florida panther weighs from 100 to 130 pounds, measures nearly seven feet from nose to tip of the tail, and

GFC Photograph

FLORIDA WILDLIFE

A nongame management program was added by the GFC. Habitat and species restoration and conservation stories increased in number.

## WHY HUNT?



by biff lampton

Dusk is a gray time in the heart of an oak hammock. The tree trunks are gray, the Spanish moss gray and the air takes a grayish tint as the scarlet sunset penetrates gray-green leaves.

I stood in that grayness and listened to sounds of fury, hate and danger. They came from a thicket just yards away and though I could not see the animal who made them, I knew what it was.

I stood there with my bow, a modern and deadly weapon rendered useless by the bulk and nearness of the creature.

I stood there shedding the scales of pretended sophistication and knowing the vulnerability of man in a more natural world.

"Why do you hunt?" a friend who believes the sport cruel and barbaric once asked.

"Hunting needs no justification," a wildlife biologist once told me "but could use some understanding."

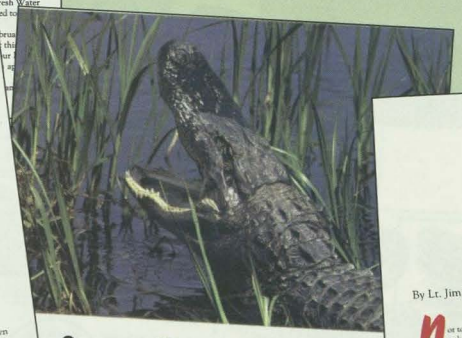
In the opinion of the former, man has outgrown the basic need to hunt. He has become civilized and social and the ethics of his civilization demand he follow a human creed. To modern man, all lesser animals subscribe to lesser law.

The biologist has been taught that hunting is a viable tool in the management of a renewable resource and argues that without sport hunting the world would be less wealthy in wildlife. He cites the history of contributions of wildlife and cannot understand how other men new to his area of interest rule him so inhumane.

Between the two philosophies a great battle rages. On the one hand are anti-hunters sincere in belief and purpose. Many are seeking to impose their views on hunters by all available methods up to and including legislation.

The biologist and his sportsmen allies are in a position of defense and their arguments tend to jus-





## Gator Hunters Renew a Florida Tradition

uffstodt, Everglades Region

he whole world was
lorida unveiled the
uild alligator hunt
ember 1. The
ers were instant
unded and
radio, and
Tokyo, Japan,
ly.

As the sky faded over the fabled Everglades, a handful of gator hunters preparing to launch kicker-boats at Holiday Park Concession Area were surrounded by representatives of the largest and most influential news organizations in the nation.

The majority of the press manned access points far into the night, patiently awaiting the arrival of the first successful hunter. As the hours wore by, the throaty echo of distant outboard engines, or the glimmer of darting lights, lured them back toward the boat landing in eager anticipation.

More than 75 reporters endured the vigil at Holiday Park, at the Sawgrass Fish Camp, or at a rest area midway down Alligator Alley, State Road 84. They were all there—the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the Boston Globe, the French news agency, *London Morning News*, a half-dozen Florida television stations, a Tokyo television reporter, and a pack of freelancers working for varied clients.

In the Everglades, the Law Enforcement Division also was out in force. Some officers were assigned duty at access are patrolled on levees in their several prowled the dark c airboats; and, overhead, a Commission aircraft conduc aerial surveillance.

Just a few minutes after 1 at the Sawgrass Fish Camp, of reporters formed around young men from Pembroke P who were the first hunters in than a quarter-century to wall of the Everglades with a legall captured wild alligator.

Doug Mackey, 24, the perm holder, and Steve Prater, 27, li licensed agent/assistant, brough ashore an eight-footer, weighing around 150 pounds. They had



## Get Ready For Peacock Bass

**Beginning July 1st, Butterfly Bass Are Keepers**

By Lt. Jim Huffstodt

Not too many years ago the only sportsmen who knew the thrill and challenge of peacock bass fishing were the wealthy. Affluent sportsmen flew into the far reaches of South America searching out these flamboyant fighters.

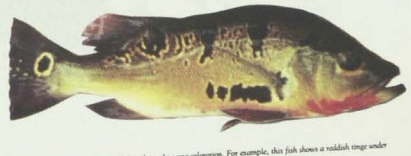
Today, that angling privilege belongs to anyone in the Dade County area who has a couple of lures or a bucket of shiners and a few dollars for a fishing license. And, as of July 1, lucky anglers can take home up to two butterfly peacock bass but only one can exceed 17 inches. This rule is designed to protect larger peacock bass.

This is a significant benchmark in a ten-year program that has ignited interest across the state and nation. The Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has enhanced recreational fishing opportunities in the state's southern canal system by bringing a world-class sport fish right to Miami's doorstep.

Stocking an exotic species runs counter to conventional fisheries logic, and for good reason. Through the years, the deliberate or inadvertent introduction of foreign fish has — with some exceptions — disrupted native populations and wreaked havoc with nature's delicate balance.

Sensitive to that fact, the Commission devoted years to exploring the possible negative impacts of stocking peacock bass. Staff at the Commission's Non-Native Fish Research Laboratory in Boca Raton, with guidance from director Paul Shafland, invested long hours in thought and experimentation before recommending this departure from the norm. The warm coastal canal system running throughout Miami and other communities in Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties was long ago invaded by several successful exotic fishes — including the spotted tilapia. This African native fish thrives and enjoys a decided advantage over Florida native sport fish, since the tilapia aggressively guards its young.

The Dade County canal system was the worst example of tilapia invasion. Several years ago Commission surveys documented



Not all butterfly peacock bass have the same coloration. For example, this fish shows a reddish tinge under its jaw. These fish are now part of the Record Fish Program.

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My wife and I have signed a peace treaty that has resolved 10 years of household war. She has agreed that if I never take her fishing again, she will never insist I go shopping with her.

Compromise is the basis of a happy marriage. I believe, and this com

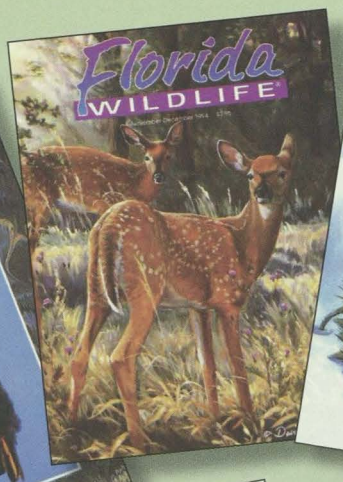
## of fish & wives

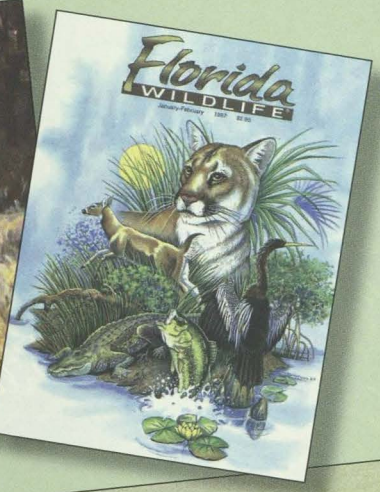
By Biff Lampton

to be diverted down my arm.
d home with one hand on my head and
holding the rod high enough so the line
pull the hooks in deeper. Entering the
re were noises coming from the living
pushed the door open.
ere about 20 women seated at little
ered around the room and all were
er bridge hands in intense
on. Nobody even noticed me.

FLORIDA WILDLIFE

# Florida Wildlife the 90s




## Remember the Drought?

By Richard Franz

1991 slips away, I recall the ... stripped ... in the sandhill region of north-central Florida failed to respond since water tables had retreated three to six feet be... Those that showed ... when the ... formed in the lowest parts of their ba... Much more rain would be needed ... to return these lakes to former levels, ... but at least they were wet again. ... At Putnam Prairie in western ... Putnam County, marsh vegetation had ... for months. Wall Lake and ... bass had ... ke on ... this ... rie, as ... alked ... hang- ... in ... ame from ... tic, too, ... er species ... alligators,

## What Fisherwomen Taught Me

By Lt. Dewey Weaver

When I see the beautiful, dark coloration of the warmouth, I think of all the days of enjoyment that fishing has provided, and the early days I spent on mystical waters with names like Okapiko, Ockawaha and Okefenokee. I remember the fish we caught, with equally strange names: warmouth, bullhead, stumpknocker. Most of all, I recall the three fisherwomen who had a great impact on me.

The Beverly girls were born and lived to adulthood on the edge of the Okefenokee Swamp. They were the daughters of a sharecropper who often spent his winters in the vast swamp, trapping raccoon, bobcat and otter. Cash was a rare commodity and the family endured because of nature's bounty. They lived through the Great Depression, when fish was a staple of their diet, fine-tuning their skills with pole, hook and line on the canals and flatwoods ponds of the swamp country.

All three sisters, Edna, Luvern and Paris, married at an early age and left the land of shaking earth, but their love of fishing would go with them. They and their husbands moved to Florida in the early 1950s and settled to raise families and fish the famous waters of the Sunshine State.

From early childhood, each of the women contributed to my education. Edna, my mother, taught me that love of fishing and love of family go together. Many ventures to our favorite fishing hole included a family meal of fish, grits and hush puppies. Every fish caught by the children was a trophy and a great contribution to the meal. We had that special feeling that, without our help, someone would go hungry.

These were lean times and fish helped stretch the family budget, although I never felt that we were poor. I only looked forward to the fishing trips.

We were taught to depend on each other, whether it was baiting the hook or landing a fish. Mother always imparted the belief that you helped another whenever the opportunity arose. I learned from her that caring and family are more valuable than money.

## Genetic Restoration of the Florida Panther

By Ken Johnson and Darrell Land
Photographs by William A. Greer

Genetic restoration of Florida panthers is a cooperative effort of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.

The cougar from Texas hissed and roared while a group of naturalists unloaded her air-shipment crate, but she didn't bound out when the door was finally opened. The large cat we named TX 107 peered timidly around the corner of the crate until a few hefty shakes and a steep tilt encouraged her first steps into her new home in south Florida. She walked slowly away and vanished silently into the dense palmetto underbrush, wearing a radio collar so that we could monitor her.

This cat was one of eight female cougars caught and moved from west Texas to south Florida to restore historic health and variation of the Florida panthers' gene pool. A century of genetic isolation and inbreeding has contributed to congenital heart defects, kinked tails, cowlicks and undescended testicles in male panthers.

Florida panthers and Texas cougars are two subspecies of the same species. Their ranges once overlapped, and panther researchers expect the Texas females to readily mate with Florida males to produce viable offspring similar to when the... freely ...

... offspring mature into breeding adults they will continue the genetic restoration of a healthier, more resilient population of Florida panthers.

The Florida panther is the state mammal and has been considered endangered since the 1950s. ... wildlife researcher... between ...

... of life history and biomedical aspects of the small panther population in South Florida.

An estimated 30-50 adult panthers range over about 4,844 square miles of habitat. Adult male home ranges average more than 193 square miles and usually overlap home ranges of several adult females that average just under 77 square miles in size. Panthers prey primarily upon deer and wild hogs but will also take a variety of smaller animals including raccoons, rabbits, armadillos and alligators.

The panther social order is mediated by an aggressive dominance hierarchy and mutual avoidance system that maintains a relatively stable population within the limited habitat in south Florida. Panthers killing panthers over ... females or in territo... become ...

## The Hunter's Stake in Conservation

By Frank H. Adams

Mention the term conservationist to most people in this country and visions of hunters bedecked in the latest from camouflage boutiques don't spring to mind. A more common image of conservationists here is one of folk sporting a look more in tune with L.L. Bean.

Many people think of hunters as a bunch of bobbsey twins who wreak havoc with the natural world while they hunt down Bambi.

But it might be worthwhile to consider what hunters have in common with environmentalists in organizations like the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society. As increasing pressures ... can use all ... lead shot. In the same book he urged states to create seasons and bag limits in areas where commercial hunters were only wasted game.

During the same period, hunting clubs in Maryland became incensed over the nighttime massacre of roosting ducks and geese by market hunters in their area, and successfully worked to ban it. That was a great leap for conservation because the federal government didn't get involved in this fight in a major way until over three decades later.

The conservation movement also got a major boost from an avid hunter named Theodore Roosevelt, our country's 26th president, who held that office from 1901 until 1909, and established five national parks during his presidency.

The conservation missions of ... other hunters grew out of the short-term ... conserved over 7 million acres of waterfowl habitat throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico. Preserving habitat benefits not only game species, but serves whole communities of plants and animals.

Their work has helped 18 of North America's threatened and endangered species, including peregrine falcons, whooping cranes, bald eagles, Bunnosed leopard lizards, salt marsh ... harvest mice and San ... On the state lev... has preserved over ... waterfowl habitat u... tune of $750,000. T... project in Florida ... Game and Fresh W... Water Management ... 3,000-acre wella... There are ... vation groups su... and the Nationa... Florida Wildlif... part of their m... conservation. ... Beyond ... preservation ... conservatio... hunting su... tion. This ... Robertson ... launched ... protect ...

The GFC celebrated its 50th anniversary. In 1999, it was abolished and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission was born, charged with management of marine resources as well as wildlife and freshwater resources.

## The Great Florida Birding Trail

By Nancy Jordan

The binoculars, spotting scope, field guides, snacks, water and insect repellent are all packed and ready to go for a day of birdwatching. Don't forget the map!

The Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC) along with the Florida Department of Transportation is cosponsoring The Great Florida Birding Trail, a 2,000-mile highway trail which unifies existing and new birding sites throughout Florida. Modeled after the successful Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail, the project combines special highway signs identifying birding trail sites with a flipchart map showcasing birding opportunities in Florida. The trail consists of a series of loops, each containing 5-10 sites highlighting communities and special ecosystems like the Lake Wales Ridge.

The first section, the East Florida Birding Trail, with an estimated 190 sites, will be completed during the year 2000. Birdwatchers, of all abilities will be able to locate a variety of birding sites by using the map and following highway signs depicting the Great Florida Bird Trail logo – the American swallow-tailed kite.

Until now, maybe only local birders knew about the better birding sites in the area. Most publicity went to the federal and state sites, such as J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge and Everglades National Park. The Great Florida Birding Trail aims to combine ... more prominent birding sites with the smaller local sites in driving loops that will attract coastal birdwatchers and their money into the surrounding communities. For example, a birdwatcher in the Brevard County-Space Coast area could visit federally-owned Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and Canaveral National Seashore; and city and county sites such as Hatbill Park, Ulmuay Wildlife Sa... Turkey C...

## Florida's Melanistic Bobcats

Text and Photographs by Steve Laing

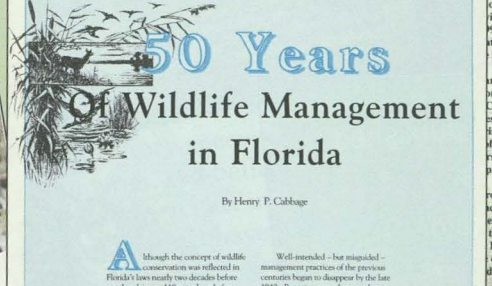
While Florida is known to have many unique wildlife species, bobcats are not generally thought to be one of these special critters...or are they!

The bobcat (Felis rufus) is found throughout North America, including most of the contiguous United States, southern Canada and Mexico. The appearance of bobcats varies greatly in different geographic locations throughout its natural range. Different mammalian subspecies often have distinctive fur coloration and markings that usually are reflective of the surrounding environment. Florida's bobcats (F.r. *floridanus*) are generally darker gray with fewer markings than those subspecies in northern and western regions. Among the species' many color variations, however, the ... black bobcat is most ... southeastern Florida and nowhere else in the animal's extensive range. There were two melanistic bobcats documented in each of Martin, Palm Beach, Broward and Polk counties and one in each of Glades and Dade counties. Of these verified cases, three were live-trapped and sent to zoos, two were killed by trappers, four were killed by vehicle collisions, and the most recent one was live-trapped and released.

**There have been 10 documented cases of black or melanistic bobcats since 1939.**

Melanism is a genetic mutation that results in a tendency toward black coloration of the animal due to an abundance of melanin, a dark pigment found in the skin and hair of most mammals. Melanistic races or color phases are relatively common in some mammalian species such as red fox (Vulpes vulpes), fox and gray squirrels (Sciurus niger and S. carolinensis), mink (Mustela vison). Melanism in the big cats is extremely rare outside the equatorial rainforest region. Apparently, very warm and moist climates, which support tropical rainforests, favor the occurrence expression of this genetic mutation in felids and enhance the survival of melanistic individuals.

Worldwide, wild felids commonly exhibit melanistic or black color phases including leopards (*Panthera pardus*) in Java and Malaysia; jaguars (*onca*) in the South Amer... Temminck's g...



## 50 Years Of Wildlife Management in Florida

By Henry P. Cabbage

Although the concept of wildlife conservation was reflected in Florida's laws nearly two decades before statehood, it was 118 years later before science took a dominant role in the process.

In 1946, the three-year-old Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission employed its first wildlife biologist to study the effects of land use on quail. Today, 85 percent of the Division of Wildlife's 168½ positions are held by scientists and technicians.

During its early years, the division's role focused on game wildlife. Then, as the agency matured, it became increasingly evident that game management was ineffective if it didn't also include management of nongame wildlife. Officials found that practices directed at a single species inevitably affected other species as well. Even so, it was hunters and fishermen who funded the bulk of Florida's freshwater resource and wildlife management until the 1973 Legislature appropriated general revenue funds for the agency's overall programs.

Well-intended – but misguided – management practices of the previous centuries began to disappear by the late 1940s. Bounties on predators such as Florida panthers and diamondback rattlesnakes were abolished when wildlife managers learned such policies had little or no effect on game populations. In 1947, the Division of Game Management came into being and, with federal funds from the Pittman-Robertson Act for Wildlife Restoration, promptly purchased 50,000 acres of land in Palm Beach County. The tract, known as the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA), was fenced and a basic program was created there to increase production of deer, turkey and quail for public hunting.

The following year, the Robinson Land and Lumber Co. of Alabama offered the Commission control of 110,000 acres in the Gulf Hammock region of Levy County in a 25-year lease. The Commission agreed to construct a fence around the area and provide law enforcement officers to patrol it. That was the first of many lease agreements between the



## Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

By Henry Cabbage

**Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC) and the Marine Fisheries Com-onger exist. Florida voters abolished them in a 1998 election and re-ith the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) – 9.**

**t Florida has placed responsibility for conserving the state's freshwater life and wild animal life all under a single agency with roughly 1,735**

**re still sorting out such details as office space, equipment, phone lines, or to paint the vehicles, budgets, letterheads and whatnot, one thing is C basically encompasses all the programs of the old GFC and MFC, s and programs from the Department of Environmental Protection ine Fisheries Institute.**

**f Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas and some other elements stayed s, along with 10 MFC employees and 212 Marine Fisheries Institute p the new agency's Division of Marine Resources with a total of 318**

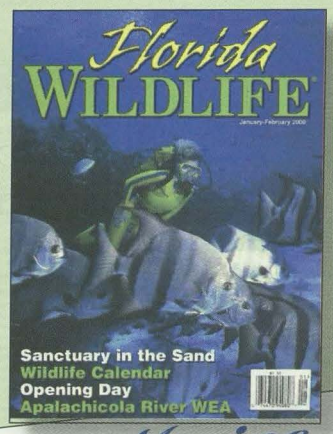
**rom DEP's Division of Law Enforcement, except for the Park Patrol, the cy Response, the Office of Environmental and Resource Crimes Investi-eld investigators, now are part of the FWC, totaling 421 full-time posi-the old GFC's 352 wildlife officers.**

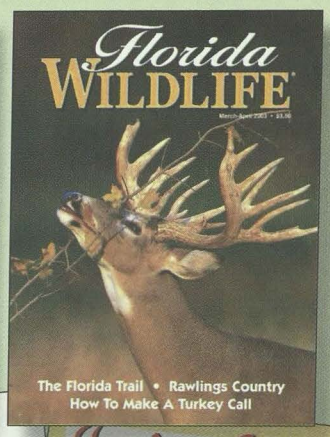
**Patrol officers will continue to concentrate on enforcing saltwater laws, officers will continue to focus on freshwater and wildlife laws. However, d to reallocate law enforcement officers to deal with an emergency, the**

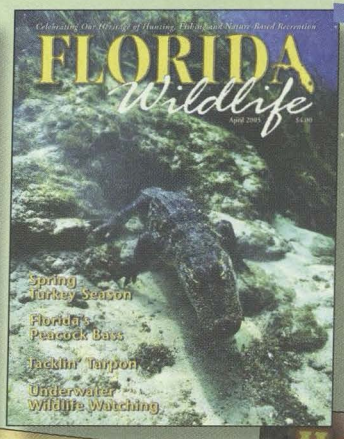
**ision of Law Enforcement has a total of 855 full-time employees.**
**u of Protected Species Management, with responsibility for managing life, is now part of the FWC's Office of Environmental Services. The old Species Section is part of the new agency's Division of Wildlife.**
**Bureau of Marine Resource Regulation and Development, which has rocessing plants and shellfish management, is now part of the Florida iculture and Consumer Services.**
**e new FWC consists of all GFC employees (990), 10 MFC employees ployees for a total of 1,785.5. It's likely that 50 vacant positions will be a workforce of 1,735.**
**irector of the new agency must be selected by the FWC Commissioners ne, must be confirmed by the Senate.**
**n annual budget of $150 million. That's a little more than twice the e old GFC.**

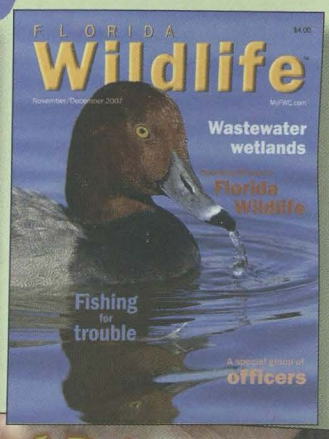
*Florida Wildlife*

# the 21st century

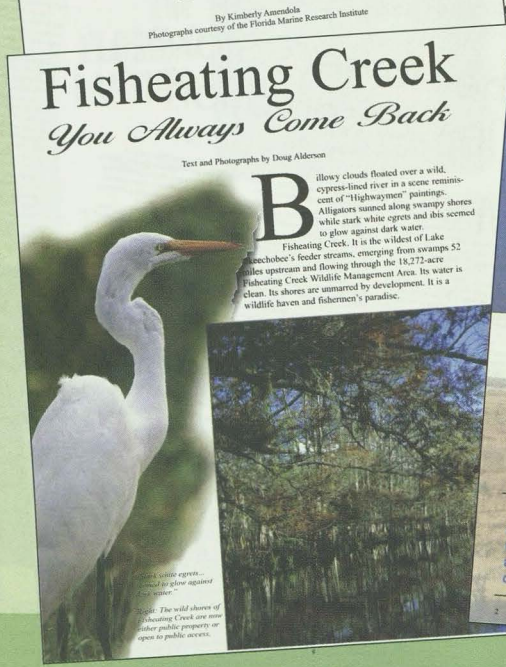


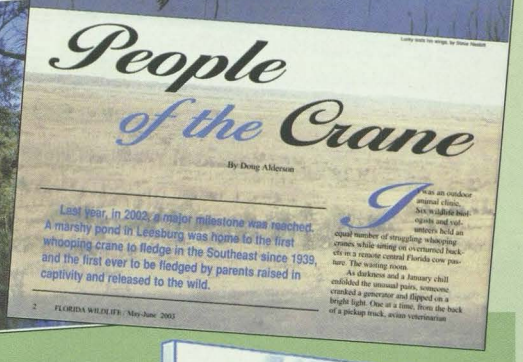



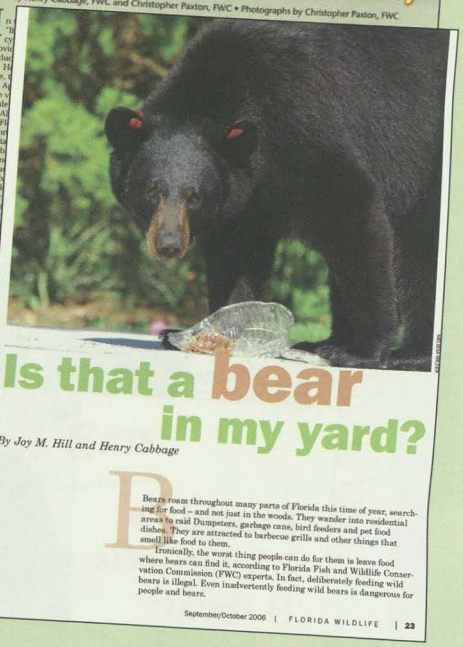



Hand-Painted Bream
Beautiful, Unique and Tasty
By Henry Cabbage, FWC and Christopher Paxton, FWC • Photographs by Christopher Paxton, FWC


Fisheating Creek
You Always Come Back
Text and Photographs by Doug Alderson
Billowy clouds floated over a wild, cypress-lined river in a scene reminiscent of "Highwaymen" paintings. Alligators sunned along swampy shores while stark white egrets and ibis seemed to glow against dark water.
Fisheating Creek. It is the wildest of Lake Okeechobee's feeder streams, emerging from swamps 52 miles upstream and flowing through the 18,272-acre Fisheating Creek Wildlife Management Area. Its water is clean. Its shores are unmarred by development. It is a wildlife haven and fishermen's paradise.


People of the Crane
By Doug Alderson
Last year, in 2002, a major milestone was reached. A marshy pond in Leesburg was home to the first whooping crane to fledge in the Southeast since 1939, and the first ever to be fledged by parents raised in captivity and released to the wild.
FLORIDA WILDLIFE / May-June 2003


Is that a bear in my yard?
By Joy M. Hill and Henry Cabbage
Bears roam throughout many parts of Florida this time of year, searching for food – and not just in the woods. They wander into residential areas to raid Dumpsters, garbage cans, bird feeders and pet food dishes. They are attracted to barbecue grills and other things that smell like food to them.
Ironically, the worst thing people can do for them is leave food where bears can find it, according to Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) experts. In fact, deliberately feeding wild bears is illegal. Even inadvertently feeding wild bears is dangerous for people and bears.
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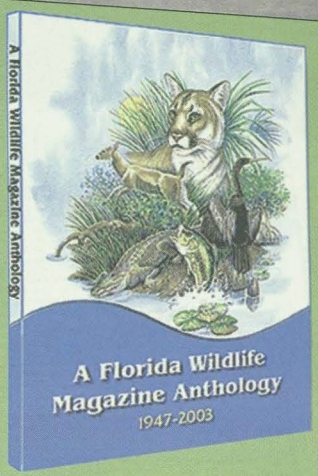
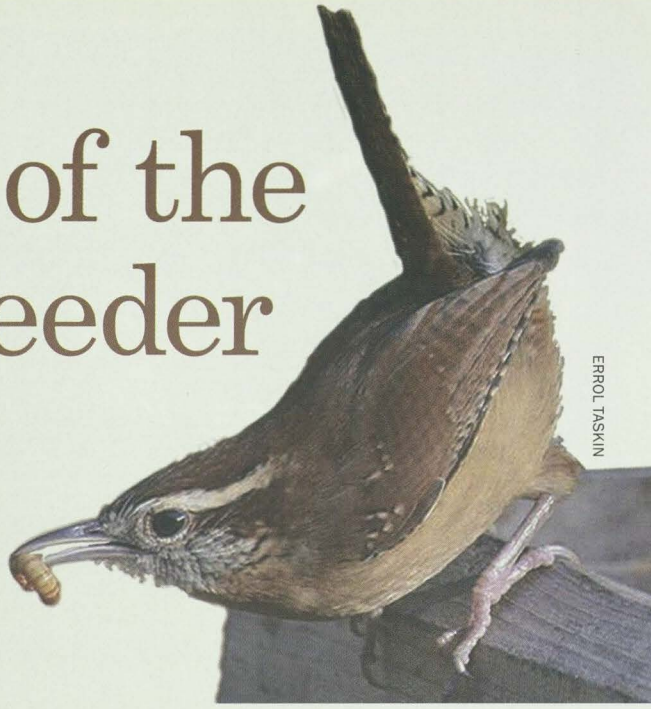
An anthology of stories published from 1947 to 2003 was assembled by former editor Dick Sublette and associate editor Doug Alderson and may be purchased for $15 from the Wildlife Foundation of Florida, www.wildlifefoundation.net or (850) 922-1066.




The magazine ceased publishing with the November/December 2003 issue. The Florida Legislature reinstated funding of the magazine in 2004, and it resumed bimonthly publication in April 2005. In January of 2006, it underwent a redesign and doubled in size, from 36 to 72 pages. FW

# Keep a record of the birds at your feeder



ERROL TASKIN

## and help scientists determine the effects of global climate change

*By Cornell Lab of Ornithology staff*

If you've ever watched birds at a feeder, you've seen varying numbers of different birds through the seasons and the years. Do some of the long-term shifts reflect changes in the environment, including global climate change? The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch is seeking help from bird watchers to help answer that question.

FeederWatchers count the birds at their feeders each week and send the information to the Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, N.Y. They've helped document unusual bird sightings, winter movements and shifting ranges of some bird species over the past 20 years. To see the effects of global climate change, scientists say they need new and veteran participants alike to keep counting birds now and well into the future.

"Being a FeederWatcher is easy and fun, and at the same helps generate the world's largest database on feeder-bird populations," says project leader David Bonter. "Since we started in 1987, nearly 40,000 people have submitted observations, adding up to more than 1.5 million checklists."

Some of the most dramatic changes revealed from data collected during two decades of Project FeederWatch may be related to changes in climate.

"We're seeing hummingbirds turning up much farther north than usual during the winter," Bonter said. "Warblers and other insect-eaters are also lingering longer into the northern winter, possibly because of warmer temperatures. Bird-count data gathered in the coming years will help us focus on these trends and what might be causing them."

"Being a FeederWatcher is easy and fun, and at the same helps generate the world's largest database on feeder-bird populations."

Recent mild winter conditions may be contributing to the northward range movements of several nonmigratory species. The Carolina wren, red-bellied woodpecker, northern cardinal and tufted titmouse all have expanded their ranges several hundred miles to the north in recent decades. Some migratory hawks also are remaining farther north in winter. Reports of sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks have increased across the northern tier of the continent in recent years.

Project FeederWatch data also show drastic declines in evening grosbeaks across the continent. While grosbeak populations are declining, other species are booming. FeederWatchers in the southeastern United States reported record high numbers of yellow-rumped and pine warblers. Reports of woodpeckers of all kinds are increasing across the northeastern quadrant of the continent. Northern flickers and Anna's hummingbirds are climbing up the list of the top 25 most-reported birds in the Pacific Northwest. Twenty years ago they didn't make the list at all.

The 21st season of Project FeederWatch gets underway Nov. 10 and runs through April 4. All ages and skill levels are welcome. To learn more about Project FeederWatch or to register, visit www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw or call the Lab toll-free at 800-843-2473. In return for a $15 fee ($12 for Lab members) participants receive the FeederWatcher's Handbook, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds in their area, a calendar, complete instructions and the FeederWatch annual report, Winter Bird Highlights. FW

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a Komodo Dragon,
a black mamba and
a bird-eating spider...

# It's just another day at Miami International Airport

*By U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff*

Wildlife Inspector Carlos Pages vividly remembers the times he has opened a crate of imported animals only to discover not all of them are still in the cloth bags that serve as their shipping cages. Those are the moments when his speed trumps their speed.

"We manage to get them repackaged," Pages said.

Fortunately, those kinds of escapes are not common. And just as fortunately, neither Pages nor any of his five U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service inspector colleagues at Miami International Airport have ever been bitten.

And there is plenty to bite them. Miami International, which sprawls across more than 3,200 acres and is still growing, is big enough to be listed as one of the few civilian emergency backup landing sites for the space shuttle. It also ranks first in the United States in international freight shipments and in live animal traffic. That translates into about 3,000 live wildlife shipments every month, which are spot-checked by the service's airport law enforcement field office.

Authorities estimate the wildlife trade in the United States is a billion-dollar business, and the potential for illegal profits pushes it into the top three smuggling crimes, right alongside drugs and guns. Eddie McKissick, resident agent in charge, guesses that, pound-for-pound, illicit profits in wildlife probably exceed those of cocaine.

"How much we stop is significant," McKissick said, "but I still worry about what's getting through."

McKissick said the illegal trade in wildlife runs in fads. "For awhile, giant fruit bats were in vogue. Then it was poison arrow frogs, then marmosets. It's a constantly changing market, driven in some measure simply by what wealthy people don't have."

It's a strange market indeed.

On this day, Pages and fellow wildlife inspector Sarita Valentin are to inspect a stack of crates, almost all of which contain at least 100 bird-eating spiders, or 500 giant African scorpions, or deadly puff adders, vipers or the legendary black mamba, a snake said to be capable of moving at 7 mph and able to kill a human within minutes.

Inspections of shipments like these can be tricky if one of the animals gets loose. They also require great care and skill and an expert knowledge of species

BLICKWINKEL / ALAMY

***Above:*** *The Goliath tarantula of South America commonly eats hatchlings but has been known to consume adult hummingbirds.* ***Below:*** *A native of Africa, the black mamba is widely considered to be the world's deadliest snake.* ***Facing page:*** *Komodo dragons are the largest lizards on the planet and their saliva teems with bacteria - any creature bitten by a dragon will most likely die of blood poisoning within 24 hours.*

descriptions because the animal inside the box must match the manifest. It also requires quick processing so the animals, provided all is in order, can continue to their destinations.

"These men and women in our law enforcement operation are really on the front line of the wildlife trade," said H. Dale Hall, service director.

"The work they do in ports of entry across the country can be dangerous. It's time-consuming, and it's important. I'm very proud of all of them."

Some inspections are easier than others, such as the time a Komodo dragon came through, housed in a cage bigger than several airline baggage carts.

However, in today's shipment, there are 10 black mambas, listed in the shipment paperwork as being worth $2,000. Some 150 poison arrow frogs are listed at $600 and 25 puff adders, $500. Those are wholesale prices. The retailer will turn a profit that would take a person's breath away faster than a black mamba.

Profits in the illegal trade are far greater.

"We caught a guy with a suitcase full of bird-eating spiders," McKissick said. "He also had 200 poison arrow frogs and some boa snakes. He bought all of that overseas for about $350. He could have sold the entire contents of the suitcase for about $45,000."

As in the smuggling of guns and drugs, it is that kind of money that drives the illegal wildlife trade; it is those profits that push smugglers to view some wildlife deaths in illegal shipments as simply a cost of doing business. The markup is so high, smugglers can lose half their animals and still make a small fortune.

A few years ago, a wildlife dealer with a legal import business was apprehended because he had also veered off into the illegal market.

Despite making $6 million a year with his legal business, he couldn't resist making another $3 million, illegally. Why? "Because he could," McKissick said.

Poisonous snakes, like a lot of animals, are shipped in cloth bags stapled to the sides of wooden crates. To be inspected, the open part of a bag is taped around the mouth of a clear, sealed cylinder. That enables the inspector to see what is in the bag without being exposed to any danger. It is not foolproof; there are some snakes that are able to bite through cloth and require more careful handling.

Eighty percent of live animal shipments to Miami are imports from Africa, South America or Europe, and between 70 and 75 percent of those go to the commercial pet trade. Wildlife trade is regulated by agreements under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the 172-member international organization of which the United States is a member. Virtually every wild animal that enters the United States must be accompanied by a correct CITES permit and supporting paperwork from the exporting nation. Most of the shipments through the Port of Miami go through the airport; live animals are rarely transported by sea.

There is almost no limit to what wildlife inspectors have found or seized in Miami: more than 300 dried seahorses smuggled from Peru; packages of spiders from Brazil and Belize with illegal paperwork; three endangered South American river turtles; and more unnerving than most, two brown tree snakes, which were promptly sent back to Indonesia. Brown tree snakes have exterminated all the songbirds of Guam and have become a major threat to people. A major concern is that the snake might be introduced elsewhere, either accidentally or deliberately.

"This kind of operation is all about tactics," McKissick said. "Ours and theirs. We can tell we're gaining if there's a dip in seizures. That means the other side is changing their tactics. And it means we have to change to keep up. They know we're coming, and that we'll always be coming, and we don't give up." FW

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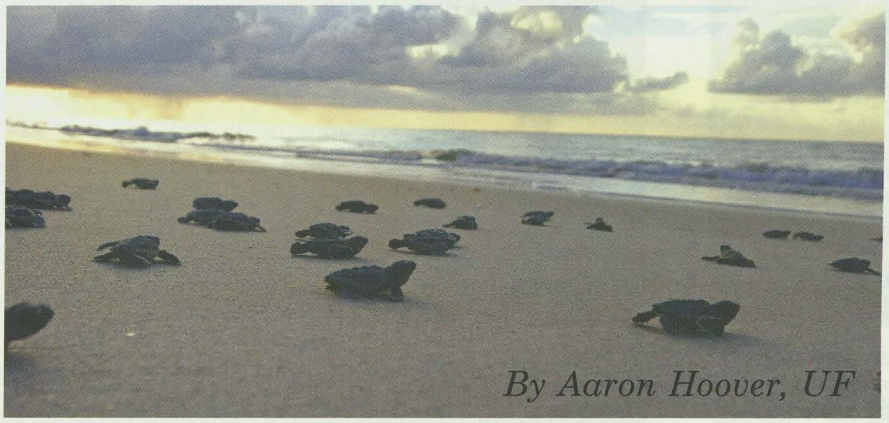
# Biologists close in on mystery of sea turtles' 'lost years'



THOMAS J. DUNKERTON

*By Aaron Hoover, UF*

Biologists have found a major clue in a 50-year-old mystery about what happens to green sea turtles after they crawl out of their sandy nests and vanish into the surf, only to reappear several years later relatively close to shore.

University of Florida (UF) sea turtle scientists say they found the clue by analyzing chemical elements ingrained in the turtles' shells. Their conclusion: The turtles spend their first three to five "lost years" in the open ocean, feeding on jellyfish and other creatures as carnivores. Only after this period do they move closer to shore and switch to a vegetarian diet of sea grass – the period in their lives when they have long been observed and studied.

"This has been a really intriguing and embarrassing problem for sea turtle biologists, because so many green turtle hatchlings enter the ocean, and we haven't known where they go," said Karen Bjorndal, a professor of zoology and director of UF's Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research.

The discovery is important not only because it's a first, but also because it may aid in conservation of the turtles — which, like most sea turtles, are classified as endangered.

"You can't protect something," Bjorndal said, "if you don't know where it is."

Famed sea turtle biologist Archie Carr first discussed the mystery of the green sea turtles' "lost years" in his 1952 book, *The Handbook of Turtles*. Half-dollar-sized hatchlings trundle off subtropical and tropical beaches worldwide, then vanish, only to reappear, dinner-plate-sized, over continental shelves in depths of less than 650 feet. Only a tiny number of green turtles between the half-dollar and plate-size have ever been spotted.

To solve the problem, researchers turned to a technique that has become increasingly important in questions related to ecological origin: stable isotope analysis.

The higher an animal on the food chain, the more heavy isotopes it accumulates. As a result, the technique, which measures the ratios of heavy to light isotopes, can distinguish samples from herbivorous versus carnivorous creatures and where on the food chain they stand.

The researchers captured 44 turtles near Great Inagua in the Bahamas. The sample included 28 that had been tagged in previous years, indicating they were residents of the site, and 16 untagged turtles assumed to have recently arrived.

They cut off tiny pieces near the center of the turtles' shells in a harmless process that Bjorndal likened to trimming one's fingernails. The biologists used a mass spectrometer, a machine that separates isotopes according to charge and mass, to analyze the oldest, or earliest-grown, portions of the shell sample versus the newest portions.

The analysis revealed that with the new arrivals to the site, the ratio of light to heavy nitrogen isotopes in the older versus new shell samples was "significantly different." The ratios were very similar to ratios observed in oceanic-stage loggerhead turtles known to be carnivorous. For these reasons, among others, the researchers concluded the turtles spend their first three to five years in the open ocean.

Green turtles nest on subtropical and tropical beaches worldwide. That suggests the young turtles are widely distributed in the oceans during their oceanic stage, but Bjorndal said further study is required to confirm that.

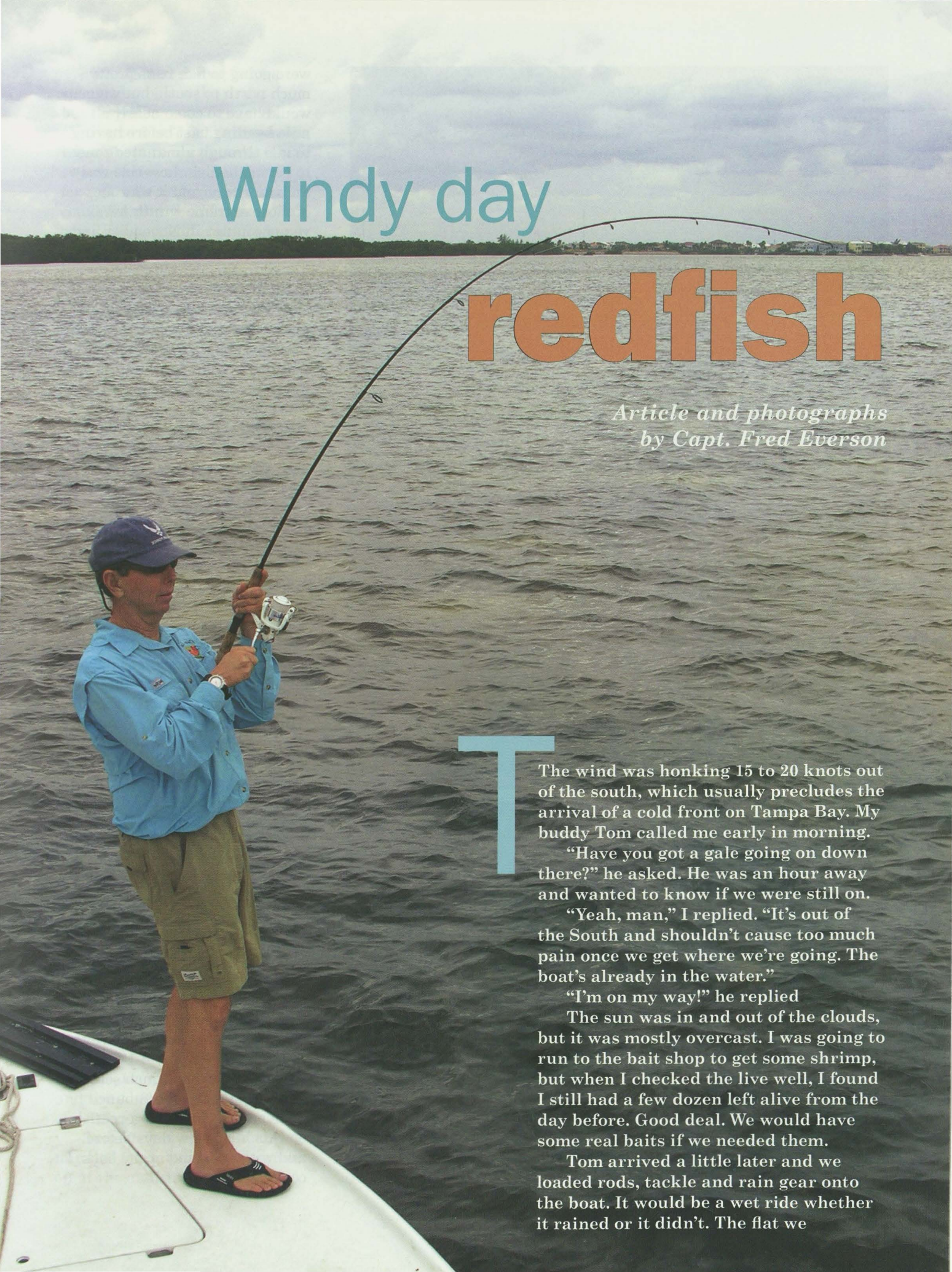
Green turtles are the ocean's largest hard-shelled turtle, with only soft-shelled leatherbacks growing larger. They were heavily exploited for food by native peoples and then by explorers and colonists who prized the animals for remaining alive and fresh for months on ships. Although they were among the first animals listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1973, they and their eggs continue to be eaten in much of their range today.

"Anything that helps us discover geographically where they are is going to stand us in good stead to be able to protect them," Bjorndal said. FW

GEORGANN PENSON

# Windy day redfish

*Article and photographs by Capt. Fred Everson*



The wind was honking 15 to 20 knots out of the south, which usually precludes the arrival of a cold front on Tampa Bay. My buddy Tom called me early in morning.

"Have you got a gale going on down there?" he asked. He was an hour away and wanted to know if we were still on.

"Yeah, man," I replied. "It's out of the South and shouldn't cause too much pain once we get where we're going. The boat's already in the water."

"I'm on my way!" he replied

The sun was in and out of the clouds, but it was mostly overcast. I was going to run to the bait shop to get some shrimp, but when I checked the live well, I found I still had a few dozen left alive from the day before. Good deal. We would have some real baits if we needed them.

Tom arrived a little later and we loaded rods, tackle and rain gear onto the boat. It would be a wet ride whether it rained or it didn't. The flat we

***From top:*** *Gabe Krakowski fights a fish near the boat; Gabe Krakowski scores a top-of-the slot red; this Little Manatee River snook struck a hard plastic twitch bait.*

were going to fish runs pretty much north to south, but we would have to come nearly a mile heading east before having to idle through a manatee zone to get at the fish. Low tide was an hour away, and it was one of those extreme winter lows you encounter in November and December.

With the tide this low, the fish would be pushed out onto the flats, away from the grassy cover that extended out a hundred yards from the mangrove edge. On a calm day you could expect to see them, but with the wind, the chop and the clouds this would not be much of a sight fishing expedition.

The ride from the dock at the mouth of the Little Manatee River was unpleasant as could be because we had to travel abeam of the wind for a long way. Finally I decided to turn dead downwind and idle a mile through the manatee zone rather than try to go around it on plane.

The south end of this flat is slightly deeper than the north end, and I hadn't fished it in a while. Here there were some grass knolls tucked between the troughs, and it all looked pretty fishy. I was on the poling platform with the wind at my back, having to pole only every hundred yards or so to correct our drift.

Tom rigged a shrimp on a jig head, removing the fan from the tail, hooking it to run backwards – a natural presentation. Even with a large shrimp you can only get four or five casts out of it before throwing it off, so blindcasting is not really practical. Since I didn't have to pole much, I had my 8 1/2-foot rod rigged with a 5-inch soft plastic mullet on a 3/8-ounce jig head. I had caught a redfish on this lure a few days before, and with the wind at my back, I could cast it 70 yards.

We started seeing fish as soon as we began the drift, but they all saw us first. After casting to 6 or 7 fish with plastic, I was about ready to make the switch to live shrimp and wait for a chance to throw at a fish I could see. But then I made a long cast to the edge of a weedy hump in the sand, and a fish struck. It was a fat 23-inch red, and the game was on. I told Tom to lose the shrimp and rig a white plastic mullet on the jig.

The next fish struck the lure over a patch of grass and burned 30 yards of drag in a heartbeat. I knew it was a jack crevalle by the way it bobbed its head as it ran, and it was about 15 pounds.

"Better get the net Tom," I told my partner. A few minutes later I had the fish at the side of the boat, but Tom couldn't get it in the net. The fish got under the boat, and the next thing I heard was the sickening crack of my 8 1/2-foot custom rod as it exploded right at the ferrule, the tip section falling away from the boat as we drifted. Dang!

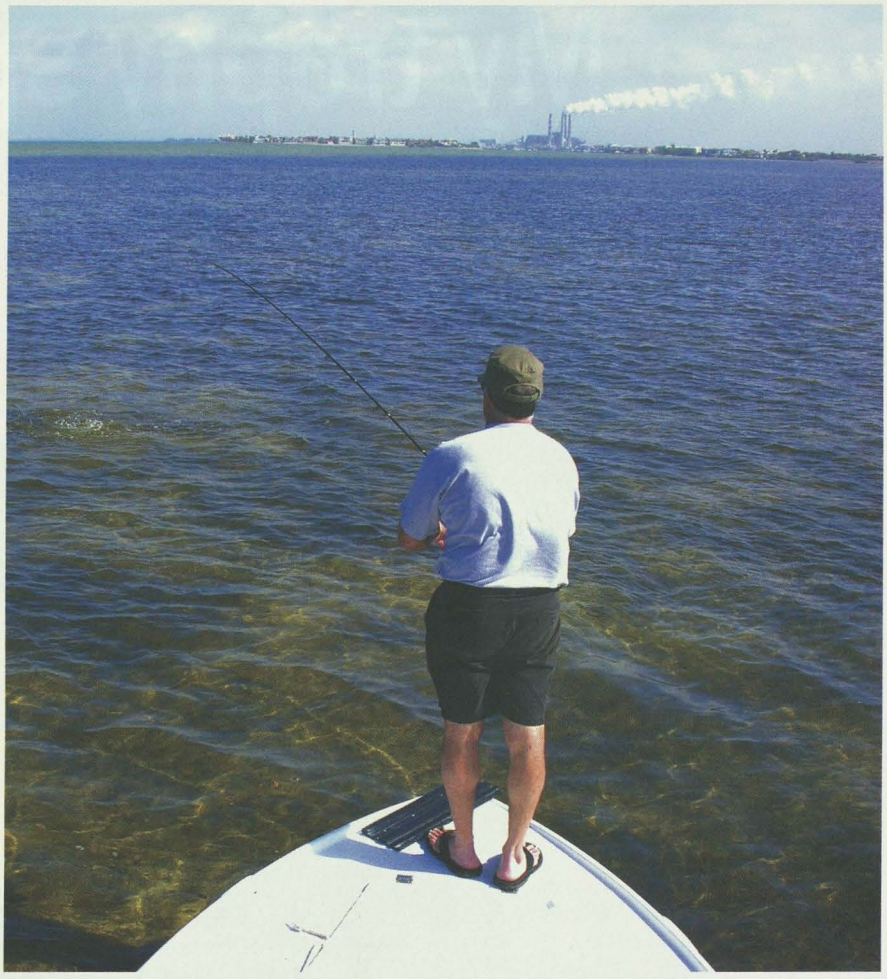
With no time to mourn, I rigged another rod and returned to the poling platform. Minutes later Tom was hooked up with a big redfish.

"They are liking the white mullet!" he said as the fish bent the rod and took some drag.

"Yes, indeed, and that fish isn't going to measure," I predicted, and sure enough, when we got it out of the net, it measured 28 inches.

We continued our drift down the flat, seeing plenty of big redfish, but they were seeing us first. The trick to hooking up was with long casts to likely looking spots well away from the boat – the middle of the troughs, the points off the grass, and the edge of the little patches of turtle grass.

Tom hooked up again a few minutes later, but the fish came off at the end of the first run.



*Robert Derick plays a fish south of Apollo Beach. Note the wind indicators in the background.*

Then he hooked another, and it looked to be another top of the slot-sized fish. After a long battle, I netted the fish and measured it at 27 1/4 inches.

By then the wind was building and the boat getting harder to control, so we decided to take it back to the dock. You learn something every day on the water if you pay attention, and the lesson for this day was that when the wind is up and visibility is down, a lure that casts well is going to be more effective than live bait. On a clear calm day when casting to laid up fish you can see, the shrimp is apt to be more productive. For prospecting downwind, however, the leadheaded jig rules.

I don't put much stock in color. On the day just described we fished white lures.

Tom caught all his fish on a white bait rigged on a white jig head. I caught one fish on a red head and white tail. I believe that getting the lure in the fish's face is a lot more important than fancy colors. In fact, I carry two colors of plastics in my box – white and new penny.

Most often, I will throw the new penny when targeting redfish, and the white when targeting snook, but they are certainly interchangeable. Casting the lure far enough away from the boat, and close enough to the fish so that he can see it will usually do the trick. FW

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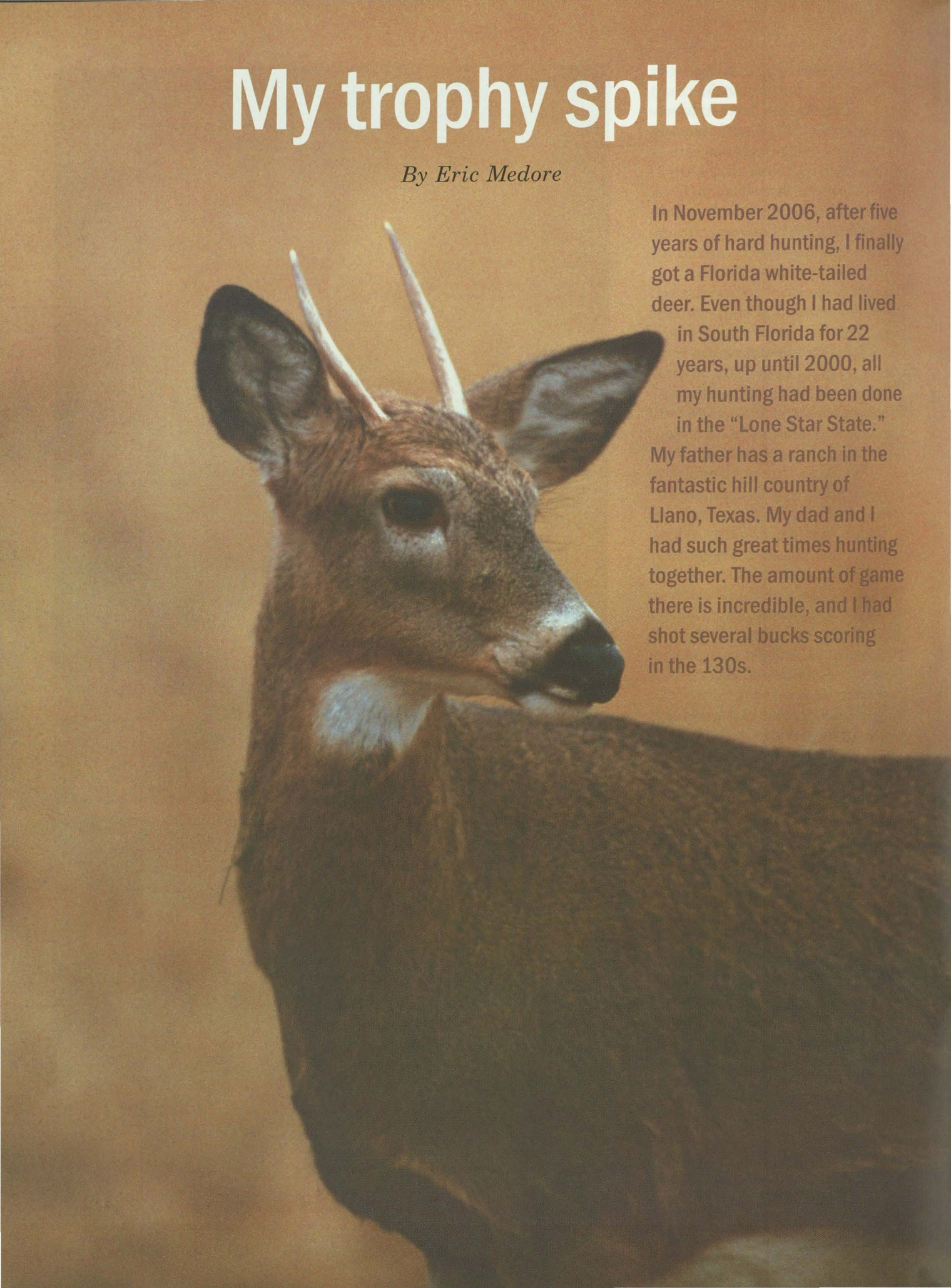
*Capt. Fred Everson is a full-time fisherman working out of Ruskin. He's been fishing, writing and taking photographs for more than 25 years.*

# My trophy spike

*By Eric Medore*



In November 2006, after five years of hard hunting, I finally got a Florida white-tailed deer. Even though I had lived in South Florida for 22 years, up until 2000, all my hunting had been done in the "Lone Star State." My father has a ranch in the fantastic hill country of Llano, Texas. My dad and I had such great times hunting together. The amount of game there is incredible, and I had shot several bucks scoring in the 130s.

In 1998, I went back to college, and in 2000, graduated with an associate degree in computer graphics and design. With a new career and a family – a wonderful wife and two beautiful daughters – I was very busy and unable to travel to Texas for hunting season. However, I lived only an hour and a half from J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA), and I decided to hunt there for the first time. I did not know the area at all and with its more than 60,000 acres of pine flatwoods, marsh and cypress swamps, I had no idea where to start. I got the regulation summary and area map from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission which helped me to familiarize myself with this northern part of the Everglades.

I was only able to go out a few times during each year's season. I tried different hunting techniques, such as still hunting and walking the trails. I also purchased a portable ground blind, but never saw a deer the few times I used it. While many hunters around here use swamp buggies because of the high hunting pressure, I didn't want to buy one.

I even tried using a bicycle to get deeper into the forest, but that proved to be a real disaster. The sugar sand was so loose in some spots, the tires could not run through it. In some areas it was OK to ride, and I could travel some distance. After riding about a mile, I was so tired I sat down with my back against a tree, planning to spend the rest of the evening there hoping a deer would cross my path, but I did not see anything. The road back was even worse. By then it was dark, and I had never felt so many mosquitoes in my life. There were clouds of the little bugs, and as I rode along, they would fly into my face and mouth. I decided to just walk alongside my bike. I was so frustrated and began to wonder if deer were really out there.

"Where are they?" I asked myself. "Do they really exist here?"

**I was so happy just being there and watching the wildlife: otters, turtles, raccoons, birds, squirrels, waterfowl, snakes, and a few times, wild turkeys.**

I knew they were there – I had seen proof in many places: unmistakable, point-shaped hoof tracks. Hunting deer was turning into a real challenge. On the other hand, I was so happy just being there and watching the wildlife: otters, turtles, raccoons, birds, squirrels, waterfowl, snakes, and a few times, wild turkeys.

One early morning about 5, I was walking beside a canal while it was still dark, and the woods looked so spooky. Suddenly, I heard a loud squawk extremely close to me, scaring me so much I jumped. As it flew away, I saw it was only a great blue heron.

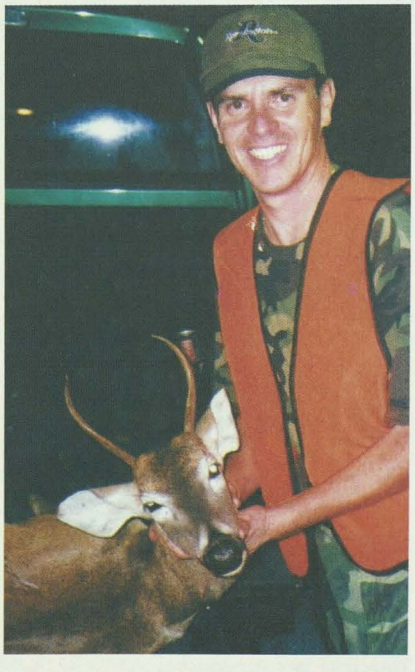
Getting ready for the 2005 season, I bought a tree stand but only had one chance to go hunting. Midday, I spotted a small doe about 100 yards away. I sat still because it is not legal to shoot a doe on the J.W. Corbett WMA. It was still exciting to finally see my first white-tailed deer in Florida. I spent the rest of the day not seeing anything else.

The next year my expectations were high, and I applied for a quota hunt permit. I planned my hunt for Nov. 9, my day off from work. I decided to try a new place on the edge of an old tomato field and set my stand about 15 feet above ground. Behind me was a swamp. It was 1 p.m. on a cloudy and breezy, yet nice day. I was patient as I intently watched my surroundings. A couple of red-shouldered hawks landing in a nearby tree made me realize I had become a part of the woods.

As the sun began to set on the horizon and nature's color dissolved into grayish-blue tones, suddenly, like an apparition, a deer slowly walked from behind me toward the open field. It was a magical moment, and I could hardly believe my eyes.

I lifted my 30-30 rifle, and in my 3x scope, saw it was a spike buck. Both antlers measured more than 7 inches. When the deer was 20 yards from me, I took my shot. The buck ran about 50 yards and fell to the ground. I was shaking with excitement. As I walked to stand beside that great animal, I thought about its wildness and the great respect and admiration I had for it.

After all the days that had turned into months and then to years, I had finally gotten my Florida deer. My hard-worked-for trophy now hangs on my living room wall. Florida is a great place to hunt! FW



JUDD COONEY / WINDIGO IMAGES

# New FWC officers hit the woods and water

*By Carol Pratt*

They come from various backgrounds, but they all have one thing in common – the desire to protect the state's natural resources. On Aug. 16, 34 diverse and determined recruits officially joined the ranks of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to become conservation law enforcement officers.

TIM DONOVAN

*FWC Chairman Rodney Barreto (left), Lt. Gov. Jeff Kottkamp and Col. Julie Jones (right) present a diploma to Officer Chasen Yarborough, who also received the Achievement Award, named in memory of Officer Roy R. Burnsed Jr., who died in the line of duty in 2001.*

Before earning that status, recruits had to complete 29 weeks of training, which included alligator handling, man-tracking, vessel operation, all-terrain vehicle driving, defensive tactics, boating safety enforcement and firearms.

FWC Commission Chairman Rodney Barreto praised the new officers.

"I'm extremely proud of this group of people," Barreto said. "It's not easy, but by successfully completing the academy, they have joined a professional organization dedicated to protecting the state's precious natural resources."

FWC's law enforcement commander, Col. Julie Jones, also praised the new officers.

"These officers are our new ambassadors," Jones said. "They will help people, enforce Florida's laws and educate those with whom they come in contact with about our great state and its natural resources."

The elite group will be assigned to areas throughout Florida. As FWC officers, they will have the authority to enforce every law of the state, but enforcing fish and wildlife laws will be their primary function.

"Resource protection is what we do every day," Jones said. "But these officers also are prepared to do their jobs in unexpected ways – whether it is helping people in hurricane-ravaged areas or assisting in search-and-rescue operations."

The class started with 43 recruits, but nine dropped out. The recruits who made it are eager to get to work.

Ben Westrope, a squad leader at the academy, formerly worked in research at NOAA.

"I wanted to be outside with people and to continue to protect the resources," Westrope said. "I'm ready to start working."

Like Westrope, Naomii Tye is ready to start work. A former laboratory technician for the Florida Department of Agriculture, she was drawn to the FWC because of her love of the outdoors. She duck hunts and fishes for bass.

"As long as I can remember, I wanted to be a wildlife officer," Tye said.

Sandra Blackburn formerly held a civilian position as hotel manager for the U.S. Army in Germany. A job with the FWC seemed like a good fit when she returned to the United States.

"I enjoy being outdoors," Blackburn said. "I like educating and helping people."

Hailing from Pensacola, William Suggs grew up hunting and fishing.

"I want to make sure my kids can enjoy the same things I did when I was a kid," Suggs said.

In college, Suggs majored in criminology but realized he didn't want to just drive around in a car on a regular beat. When he heard what FWC law enforcement had to offer, Suggs said, "That was it."

After a year on the job, FWC Officer Doyle Cook returned to the academy as a counselor for this class. Cook, stationed in Southwest Florida, is glad he signed on with the FWC.

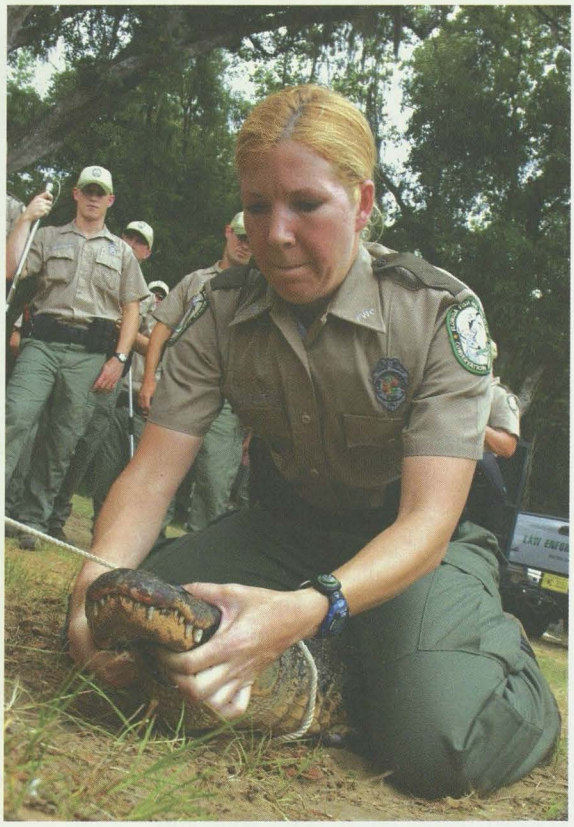
"I like the freedom of the job. I get to go to Big Cypress, the Everglades, patrol panther zones and go out on a boat in the Ten Thousand Islands," Cook said. FW

TIM DONOVAN

# WARNING:

## Do not try this at home!

One of the days most anticipated by FWC law enforcement recruits and trainers is the hands-on alligator capture and handling class. **Left:** Benjamin Westrope discovers capturing even a small alligator with a catch pole can prove a challenge. **Right:** Sandra Blackburn practices subduing an alligator by holding its jaws shut. **Below:** Alligators can move extremely quickly and surprise the most experienced handlers, as instructor Ken Hensley kindly illustrates for the class.



TIM DONOVAN

TIM DONOVAN

# Ask the **FWC**

*Illustration by Lizabeth West*

## Can foxes climb trees?

Yes, the gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) is sometimes called the "tree fox" and can quickly scramble up a tree. It is the only member of the dog family capable of climbing. It frequently has quite a lot of red hair and may be confused with a red fox. The gray fox is sometimes referred to as a "red-sided gray" and may weigh 7-13 pounds and measure up to 40 inches long including a 12-inch tail. Females are slightly smaller than males. The hair along the middle of the back and tail is tipped in black and has the appearance of a black mane. The face, sides, back and tail are gray, while the underparts are white and the sides of the neck and underside of the tail a rusty-yellow color. The gray fox is essentially a nocturnal animal and has a yapping bark.

While the gray fox is found throughout Florida, it is much more abundant in the northern sections. Mice, rats and rabbits are the mainstays of its diet, although it will consume almost anything edible. The gray fox seldom raids the farmer's hen house, as it prefers to live in wilder, denser brushy cover. While gray fox serve to maintain a balance in the rodent and rabbit populations, they, in turn, are preyed upon by dogs and bobcats, and young foxes may fall prey to owls, hawks or coyotes.

## How do I get a deer rack scored for the Florida Buck Registry?

To have a deer rack scored for entry into the Florida Buck Registry, call your nearest FWC's regional office. Visit MyFWC.com/aboutus/regnoffc.html for your local listing. An FWC reserve officer or employee who has been trained to score racks will assist you. For additional information about the Florida Buck Registry, visit the FWC's Web site at MyFWC/hunting/buckregistry/default.htm.

## Is it legal to put koi or goldfish in ponds, lakes or rivers?

It is not legal to release exotic fish, such as goldfish or koi, or use them for bait. These fish should be destroyed or put into an aquarium or fish pond where there is no possibility of escape. For additional information on fish, visit the FWC online at MyFWC.com/fishingareas.html.

## I have tortoises on my property and worry my horses might injure themselves in the burrows. What can I do?

To help acclimate your horses to the presence of burrows and to prevent potential leg injuries, indicate burrow locations by placing logs or pole-tripods over (but not blocking) burrow openings. In select cases where high-strung breeds like Arabians or thoroughbreds are densely stocked in relatively small areas, you may wish to contact the local office of the FWC regarding a permit to relocate the tortoises outside the corral or pasture. This will be useful only if the pasture fence prevents tortoises from returning; low barriers may have to be strategically placed.

## What are baitfish?

Baitfish are small schooling fish. They serve as food for larger fish, and humans use them primarily as a bait to catch larger fish (fishing). Baitfish found in Florida's salt waters include: Atlantic thread herring, scaled sardines, Spanish sardines, round scad and several species of menhaden and anchovies. For more information, visit the Web site of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute at research.myfwc.com and do a "site search" for "baitfish."

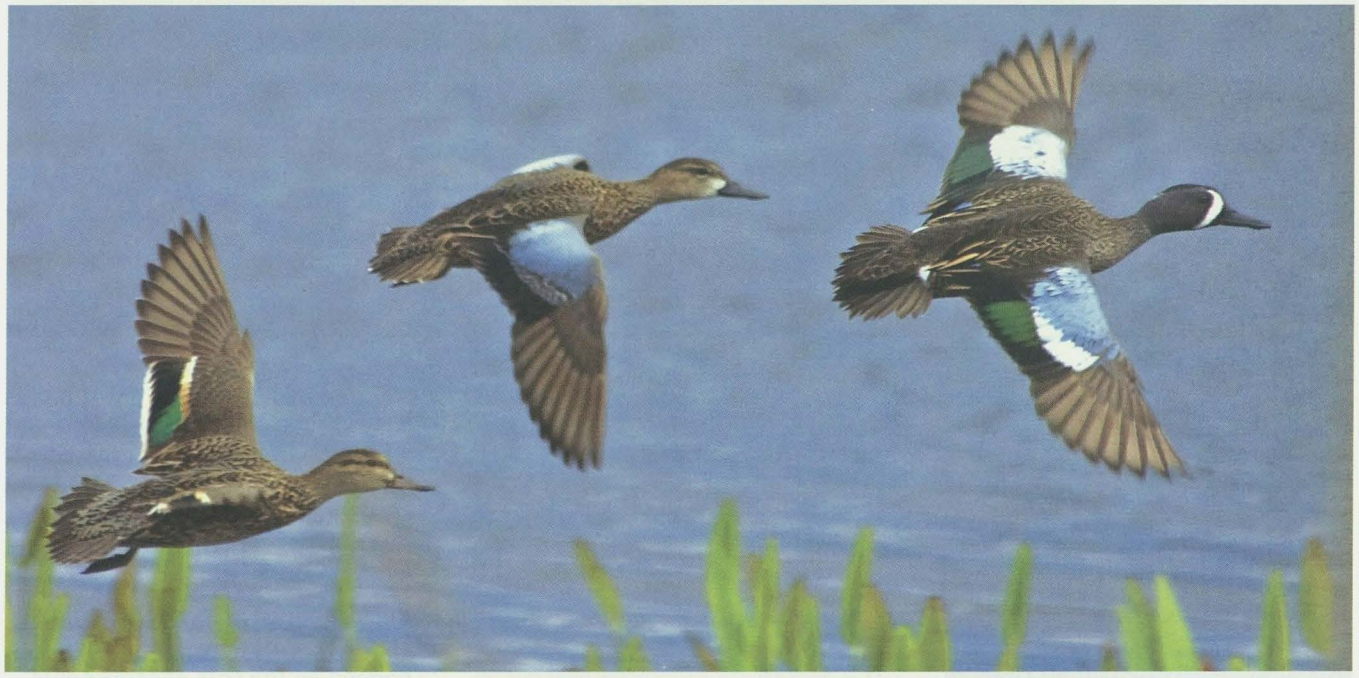
Fresh water baitfish include: golden shiners, Seminole killifish, and Missouri minnow. Also used are freshwater shrimp and minnows of nongame fish (except catfish). Black bass, peacock bass or any part thereof may not be used as bait. Live goldfish or carp may not be used as bait. Whole pickerel or bream (e.g., bluegill, redear sunfish, redbreast sunfish, spotted sunfish, flier, warmouth) or parts thereof may be used as bait for sportfishing by the angler who caught them. Whole pickerel or bream or parts thereof may not be used as bait for trotlines or bush hooks or any method other than by rod and reel or pole and line.

## Who should I call if someone has been bitten or suspects an animal of having rabies?

The agency that is primarily responsible for rabies response, prevention, treatment and control is the Florida Department of Health (DOH). If you suspect an animal of having rabies or if someone has been bitten, contact your local County Health Department. Public health staff will investigate animal bite reports. The DOH may request help from the local sheriff's department, animal control or FWC, but DOH staff makes that decision. View the listing of Florida county health departments at www.doh.state.fl.us/chdsitelist.htm.

For more information about rabies control and prevention in Florida, visit DOH on the Web at: www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/rabies/rabies-index.html.

# Duck hunting demands devotion



THOMAS J. DUNKERTON

*By Lazaro Aleman*

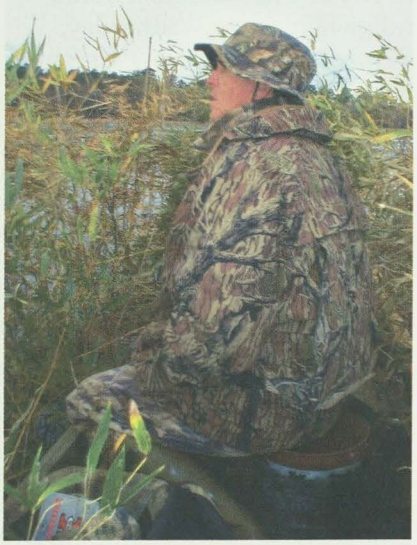
The bird, a fast-flying ring-necked hen, comes in low over the water and flares away from the decoys at the last minute, but not soon or fast enough. Standing up in the bow of the small wooden boat, shotgun at the ready, duck-hunting aficionado Mark Wirick sights on the fast-moving bird and fires twice, bringing it down with a head shot.

"By golly, we're not completely skunked," Mark declared happily, mentally marking the spot where the duck dropped, before sitting down and readying for the next shoot.

"The kids at least are going to eat duck tonight," he added, grinning.

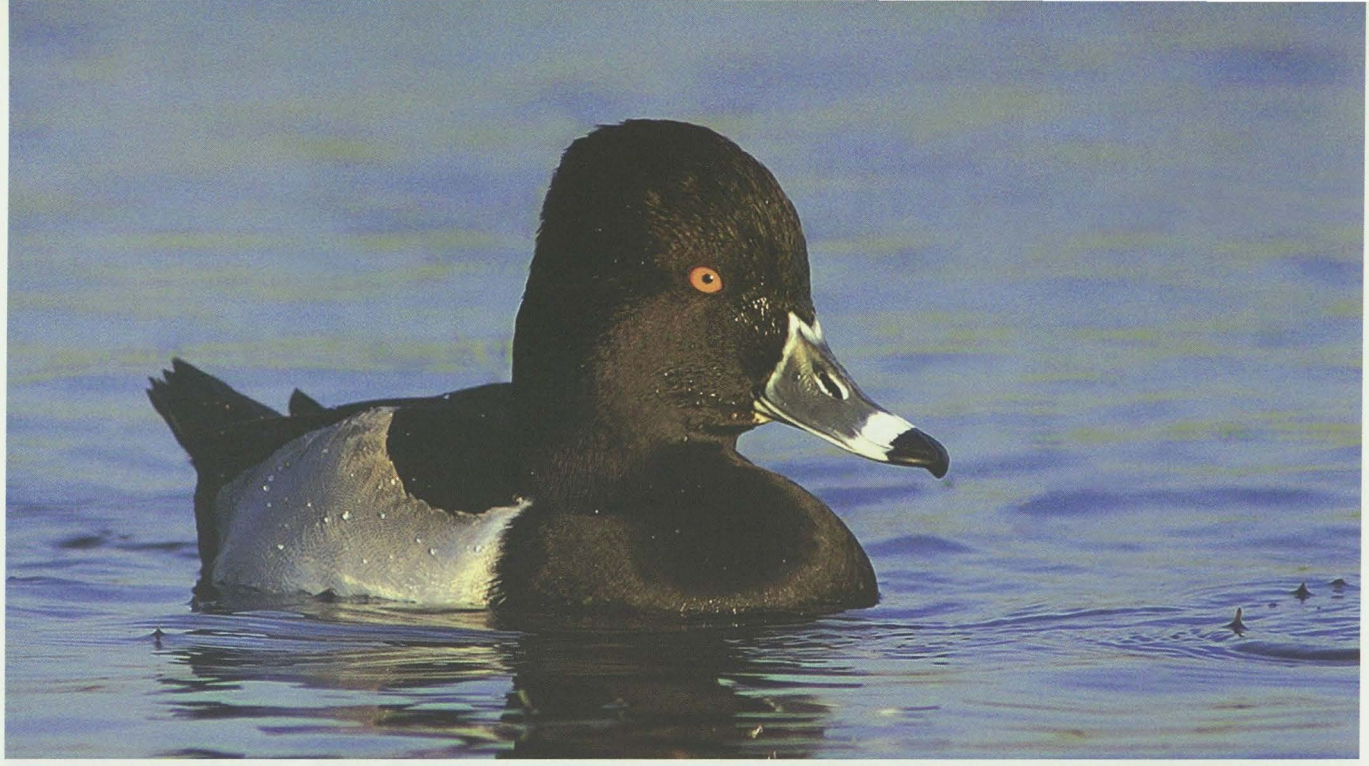
It was still early – about a half hour past sunrise – and the shooting of the hen, coupled with the occasional distant boom of a gun, renewed our hopes, although bird sightings had been rare. But hope, it's said, springs eternal.

As it is, the ring-necked hen will be the only bird to fly close enough for a shot on this cold, damp and windy January morning on Lake Miccosukee. The few other ducks that we see are either too far away or too wise, veering away from our blind while still a good ways out. But as Mark likes to say, "You have to go." Meaning that although the chance always exists that one will go out on the lake and never even fire a gun, if one never goes out, one's sure not to hunt anything. It's a philosophy along the lines of



LAZARO ALEMAN

***Above:*** *The green-winged teal (left) is the smallest North American duck. Blue-winged teals (right) are some of the first ducks to migrate each fall.* ***Right:*** *Mark Wirick scans the sky for ducks from his bamboo blind.*



JACK ROGERS

the man who prays to God for a lottery win, and God finally whispers back, "Help me out. Come half way. Buy a lottery ticket."

An avid duck hunter since 1976, when his father first took him duck hunting at age 12 on this same 6,125-acre lake that forms the boundary between Leon and Jefferson counties in North Florida. Mark hunts religiously every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday – the three days during the late November to late January duck-hunting season when the lake is opened to hunters. In fact, he is one of a select group of individuals who keep their boats permanently moored and ready to go at a private hunt camp that has existed for generations on the western shore of the lake.

Earlier that morning – 6 a.m. to be exact – Mark had picked me up at our appointed place in the small town of Monticello, and within minutes, we were at the camp, loading the few essentials into the boat by flashlight, while Bobby Plaines and Kevin Horne, two other camp regulars, likewise loaded their boat. We set out under a moonless, overcast sky, negotiating our ways past bare, silent cypress trees and along silvery channels that cut through dark, vast expanses of maiden cane and lily pads, to the bamboo blind in the south end of the lake, where we set out the decoys.

We then sat and waited, drinking coffee and conversing, while gusts of cold wind sizzled the dry bamboo leaves of our concealment and a sliver of orange finally streaked the eastern grayness. Degree by degree, the sliver widened and let in a pale gray light, revealing a vastness of straw-colored maiden cane, dark green water and hazy, gray strands of bare cypress trees on the far shore.

By and by, we're visited by a flock of red-winged blackbirds. We saw a lone egret winging gracefully across the pewter-gray sky; watched a hawk circle lazily high above; marveled at the stationary flight of a kingfisher eyeing for prey below, and became accustomed to the calls and splashes of nearby coots. But ducks, what we came to find, are nowhere in sight.

It happens, Mark remarked. Especially late in the season, when the birds have migrated farther south or become blind-shy. Earlier in this season, he related, it wasn't unusual to bag the six-duck limit on most morning and afternoon hunts. He named, among the birds he's bagged so far this season: teals, gadwalls, blue bills and wood and ring-necked ducks, the later two the most commonly found on Lake Miccosukee. Even so, it's his opinion – based on 30 years of hunting on the lake – that the overall duck population is down from what it was in the heydays of the '70s and '80s, although it's been improving in recent years, he's quick to add.

Indeed, Mark can remember when it was not uncommon to have upwards of 20,000 birds on the lake on opening day of the season. Now, a count of 5,000 ducks on opening day is considered good, he said. He offered that a great many factors account for the decline, not least of which are overall declines in the general duck population, warmer winters (ducks tend to fly in ahead of cold fronts, and the very cyclical nature of such things. But primarily, he ascribes the

low numbers locally to the dewatering of the lake several years ago, which action he supported, understanding that drawdowns are a valuable management tool for rejuvenating lakes. The problem, he believes, is that among other things, a two-year drought complicated the process and kept the lake dry longer than expected.

"I think a duck migrates where its father and mother take it," Mark opined. "So if you have three generations that don't winter on Lake Miccosukee, it's going to take a while to build the migration pattern back up. But it's been getting better ever since the lake came back up."

It's not to get better on this day, however. About 9 a.m. we called it a morning, picked up Mark's hen and retrieved the decoys. On the way back to camp, we ran into Bobby and Kevin, who are also coming in. They didn't even fire their guns, they reported. So it goes. Back at the camp, we unloaded the boats and commiserated a moment. Die-hards, Mark and Bobby decided to return in the afternoon, to see if they could make their limit. Mark dropped me off in town, where it was back to work for me. The outing was not without reward, however, notwithstanding the lack of birds. I found the experience had enriched me. Indeed, I carry fresh the memory of a flock of red-winged blackbirds, the graceful flight of a lone egret, a picturesque winter sunrise, and coffee and conversation warmly shared. FW

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*Lazaro Aleman is a newspaper and freelance writer in North Florida with a long and abiding interest in the outdoors.*

## Two public lakes in North Florida recognized as prime duck-hunting sites

Miccosukee is one of two public lakes in North Florida that is recognized as a prime duck-hunting site; the other is Lake Iamonia.

That's the opinion of Buddy Dekle, former regional vice president of South Atlantic Flyway for Ducks Unlimited (DU) and Diane Roth Eggeman, waterfowl management coordinator for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

The two agree that the duck population on both lakes has declined in the past decade or so. The trend, however, appears to be reversing. At least, the duck numbers were up on Lake Miccosukee during the 2006-07 hunting season, Eggeman said.

One possibility she offers for the resurgences is that ring-necked ducks are reestablishing their migration pattern, after its interruption by the drought of the mid-1990s. Also, the habitat has returned to a point where it's attractive again to ducks, she offered.

Eggeman makes the point that ring-necked ducks have not dwindled in North America. Rather, there's been a change in their winter distribution and migration patterns.

"The ducks are wintering farther north," she said.

Could warmer winters and global climate change be part of the equation?

"It's a speculation, but it's not documented," Eggeman said.

As to why hunters are seeing fewer ducks on the lake, or think they are seeing fewer ducks, a number of factors are involved, Dekle said.

"I think people argue the point back and forth," he said. "But we still have a large number of ducks. The thing is, they don't come to the lake like they used to."

Several plantations surround the lake and draw ducks to their large ponds, Dekle said.

"When the plantations call, the ducks come to the lake," he said.

The large size of Lake Miccosukee – 6,125 acres – is also a factor in how many ducks a hunter sees, Deckle said.

"The lake is so large, the ducks can go to one end or the other," he said. "Hunters have to keep the birds moving, so the number of hunters is another factor. Just because a hunter doesn't see ducks on a particular day doesn't mean the ducks aren't there."

LAZARO ALEMAN

***Right:*** *Kevin Horne (left) and Bobby Plaines (right) return to camp empty-handed.* ***Facing page:*** *The ring-necked duck is one of the most common wintering ducks in Florida, often seen on lakes and ponds, especially in North and Central Florida.*

# Spring through fall is party boat time in Panama City Beach

*By Henry Cabbage*

Relatives visiting us Floridians last summer – as out-of-state relatives often do – wanted to do a little saltwater fishing. They wanted something a little more exciting than pier or surf fishing, but they balked at divvying up $600 or so to book a charter boat.

"Let's go out on one of the party boats at Capt. Anderson's Marina," I suggested.

We made reservations for the $55 six-hour trip aboard the Ocean Queen that was to shove off at 9 a.m. the next day. The $85 12-hour boat and the $70 10-hour trips were full.

You only need to take two things with you when you fish from a party boat. You need a towel to wipe the bait off your fingers, and you need to take a little cash for reasonably priced food or drinks. By the way, the cook aboard the vessel is Midge Burger, and she knows how to cook a great cheeseburger.

Before we pulled away from the dock, everyone gathered at the bow for a group photo that would be printed and ready for purchase for $5 each by the time we returned. Also, Ms. Burger keeps a digital camera and printer in the galley. If you catch a nice fish, and if you didn't bring your camera, she'll be glad to help you.

The skipper on the Ocean Queen is 31-year-old David Rich, a third generation captain, following in the wakes of his father Buster Rich and grandfather Dave Crockett. He's been working aboard the Queen the past seven years. Previously he worked aboard vessels that service offshore oil rigs.

"We'll be fishing about 11 miles off shore," Rich said.

The Queen has been part of the five-party boat fleet at Captain Anderson's since 1962. The Anderson fleet itself dates back to 1855. It supplied salt fish to the confederacy during the Civil War.

The 90-minute trip to the first fishing spot gave me a

chance to chat with Ms. Burger. She turned out to be an Indiana native who moved to Panama City and started cooking aboard the party boats four years ago.

On the way out to sea, she promptly filled breakfast orders and poured coffee. The food was all fresh – not the pop-it-in-the-microwave-until-it-dings variety.

A couple of hours later, she would be taking orders for burgers, sandwiches, soft drinks and beer.

Outside the cabin, deck hands scrambled around, rigging fishing gear and cutting squid and baitfish. The 60 or so passengers were fascinated by the flying fish that shot out of the water and flapped their pectoral fins to fly over the water for 50 feet. Bottlenose dolphins played around the boat, anticipating the feast of undersized fish that would come flying overboard soon.

Red snapper had to be at least 16 inches or they would go right back into the Gulf. Some of them would revive and swim back to the bottom. The slower ones belonged to the dolphins. The same was true for undersized vermilion snapper, lane snapper grouper and others.

The deck hand for the port bow quarter of the vessel was Jeff Bodiford. When we approached the first stop he explained how deep-sea fishing works.

"When we stop, wait for the captain to blow the horn before you let out your line," he instructed.

He showed the anglers how to operate the heavy fishing gear and cautioned everyone to keep their thumbs on the spool until the weight hits the bottom to avoid getting a backlash that would resemble a bird's nest.

"As soon as it hits the bottom, flip this lever," he said, demonstrating the action, "and immediately reel your line in five to eight cranks. If you do that, we shouldn't have a lot of people getting their lines tangled."

Unfortunately, the individual stationed next to me must not have been paying attention to that part of the instruction.

"If you do get tangled up, just shout 'Jeff!' and I'll come take care of it," the deck hand said. "When you do catch a fish, I'll measure it, and if it's of legal size, I'll put it on the stringer with your number in the box. If it's too small, we'll put it back in the water. We have to be very careful about size limits."

The deckhand then demonstrated how to bait the two hooks on each rod and reel. He suggested squid on one hook and cut bait on the other.

"When the captain blows the horn again, it's time to reel your line back in, place the weight in the trough, and we'll move on to the next spot," Bodiford said.

Incidentally, the spots the captain knows about are trade secrets, so no one is allowed to take a global-positioning device aboard the boats.

Finally the boat slowed and circled an area and then stopped. Capt. Rich blew the horn.

Along with the other anglers, I lowered my line into what must have been 100 feet of water and almost immediately reeled in two vermilion snapper at one time. They're good eating, but generally smaller than red snapper.

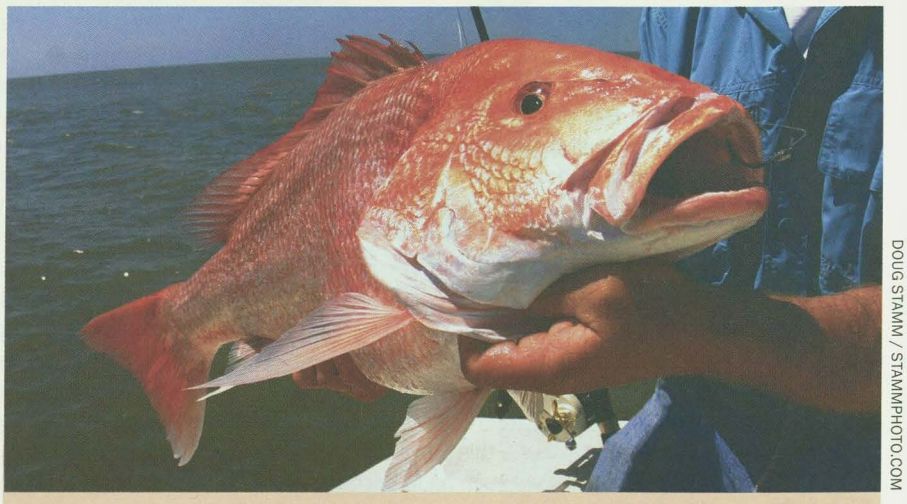
When I hauled in my second keeper red snapper, the deckhand told me I was finished for the day, but I still got to bring in a couple of grunts, and I could have kept some grouper if I could have hooked them, which some of the other anglers did.

One man even managed to bag a king mackerel that went after a snapper while he was reeling it in. That happens sometimes.

Years ago, I hooked a baitfish on a gold hook, and while I was reeling it in, a bonito took it and ran with it, and before I could reel in the bonito, a barracuda bit it in half.

After five or six stops, Capt. Rich blew the horn the last time for the day, and we headed back to the dock with enough fresh fish for a lavish feast. Not a bad day for $55.

The Capt. Anderson's Marina also has vessels for a dinner-dance cruise, gospel music dinner cruise and dolphin viewing, not to mention a nice fleet of charter boats. You can make reservations by calling (850) 234-3435 or visiting www.captandersonsmarina.com. FW



DOUG STAMM / STAMMPHOTO.COM

*The minimum size limit for vermilion snapper is 10 inches in the Gulf and 12 inches in the Atlantic, and the bag limit is 10 per day. Red snapper (above) have to be at least 16 inches in the Gulf and 20 inches in the Atlantic. The daily bag limit is four in state waters (within 9 nautical miles of shore) and two in federal waters in the Gulf and two in state and federal waters in the Atlantic.*

## FWC postpones vote on manatee management plan and reclassification

The FWC postponed a decision Sept. 12 to adopt a new management plan and two rules to reclassify manatees from endangered to threatened.

Commissioners had planned to take final action on the proposals during their Sept. 12 session, but Gov. Charlie Crist, in a Sept. 10 letter to FWC Chairman Rodney Barreto, asked for the postponement. Crist expressed concern that three FWC commissioners have just begun their terms and may need more time to evaluate manatee issues.

"We'll get with the governor and address his concerns," Barreto said.

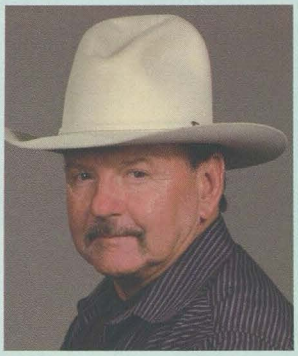
New commissioners Dwight Stephenson, Ron Bergeron and Kenneth Wright said they will make every effort to be prepared to vote on the issue by the FWC's December meeting in Key Largo.

## Two new Commissioners assume FWC posts

Two new Commissioners assumed their posts on the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) on Sept. 12.

During the first day of the FWC's three-day meeting at St. Petersburg, new Commissioners Ron Bergeron of Ft. Lauderdale and Kenneth Wright of Winter Park began their five-year terms on the seven-member commission. They replace former Vice Chairman David K. Meehan and former Commissioner H.A. "Herky" Huffman.

Bergeron, an engineering contractor, is president and owner of Bergeron Family of Companies, based in Ft. Lauderdale. He was born on a family vacation in New Orleans Sept. 15, 1943. Even so, he notes with pride that he is a fourth-generation Floridian.



*Commissioner Bergeron*

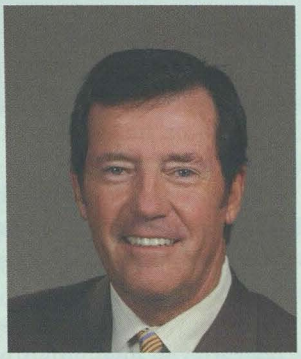
Saving the Everglades and protecting wildlife have been Bergeron's lifelong passions. He has met with public officials regularly to help steer priorities for Everglades projects to stop irreversible damage to the great wetland. For the past 10 years, Bergeron has worked with the Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District with value engineering, analyzing costs versus benefits of restoration projects.

"I am sincerely honored to have this opportunity to serve as a Commissioner and have such an important role in protecting the resources that have been such a big part of my life," Bergeron said. "My grandfather was a game warden in Florida, and that opened a wealth of life experiences and the background that drives me to protect our natural resources for future generations."

Bergeron is a member of the Broward County Airboat Association and the Everglades Coordinating Council. In addition, Bergeron is active in the Boys and Girls Club of Broward County, Broward Partnership for the Homeless and Children's Harbor.

He has six children.

Wright is a partner in the Orlando law firm Shutts & Bowen, where he has worked since 1989. He holds a juris doctorate from Cumberland School of Law, a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of South Florida and an associate degree from Orlando Junior College.



*Commissioner Wright*

He was born July 29, 1948 in Charlotte, N.C., but he has lived in Florida since 1962.

Wright is an avid outdoorsman with experience in all types of hunting and fishing in Florida.

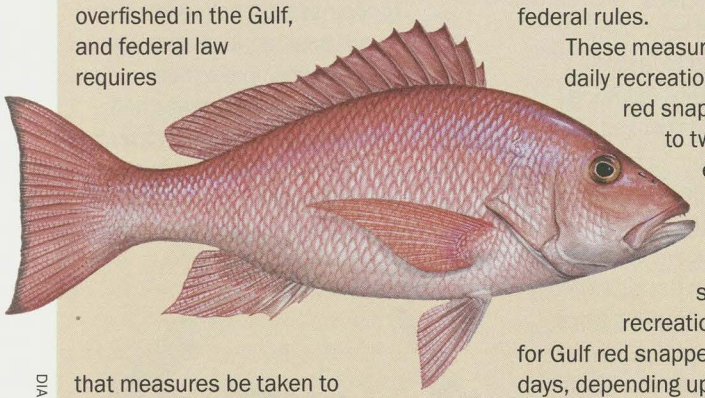
"Having lived almost my entire life in Florida, hunting and fishing," Wright said, "I look forward to working hard to ensure that opportunity is available to the next generation of Floridians."

Wright served eight years as chairman of the Environmental Regulation Commission. He said that background, coupled with his sincere motivation to be of service to the FWC, will enable him to bring a new perspective to the agency. Wright also served as chairman of the Sanford Aviation Authority and was a member of the Seminole County Port Authority. Other service includes past president of the Leukemia Society and current board membership in the Winter Park Chamber.

## FWC proposes changes to Gulf red snapper regulations

The FWC has proposed changes to management rules for red snapper harvested in the Gulf of Mexico state waters. These proposed rules would be consistent with pending red snapper regulations in Gulf federal waters.

Red snapper is considered to be overfished in the Gulf, and federal law requires that measures be taken to end overfishing and rebuild red snapper stocks. Florida waters extend nine nautical miles offshore in the Gulf, and federal waters extend beyond state waters.



DIANE ROME PEEBLES

Earlier this year, the National Marine Fisheries Service implemented a temporary action to reduce the harvest of Gulf red snapper in federal waters while a permanent plan to manage overfished stocks was finalized. This interim action for Gulf federal waters reduced the daily recreational bag limit from four fish to two fish per person, prohibited the captain and crew of for-hire vessels from retaining the recreational bag limit, and lowered the commercial minimum size limit from 15 to 13 inches total length.

However, the FWC made no changes to red snapper regulations in Gulf state waters, and Florida's daily recreational and commercial bag limit for red snapper is still four fish per person, the captain and crew of for-hire vessels can still keep the recreational bag limit, and the commercial minimum size limit remains unchanged at 15 inches total length.

New permanent federal Gulf red snapper regulations that will replace the interim rules are expected to be finalized by late 2007 and be implemented for the 2008 fishing season. The FWC has proposed rules for Gulf state waters that are consistent with the pending federal rules.

These measures would reduce the daily recreational bag limit of Gulf red snapper from four fish to two fish per person, establish a zero daily bag limit for captains and crew of Gulf for-hire vessels, and shorten the recreational fishing season for Gulf red snapper to 107, 122 or 154 days, depending upon the outcome of the pending federal rules.

In addition, these proposed rules would reduce the minimum size of commercially harvested red snapper in the Gulf and the minimum size of imported red snapper from 15 to 13 inches total length, and reduce the daily commercial bag and trip limit of Gulf red snapper from four fish to two fish per day.

The proposed rules would also allow only non-stainless steel circle hooks to be used to harvest any reef fish when natural baits are used and require a venting tool and a de-hooking device to be present onboard vessels harvesting any reef fish.

"Florida plays an important role in the success of the federal Gulf red snapper rebuilding plan because Florida's recreational fishery accounts for a large proportion of the recreational red snapper catch," said FWC Chairman Rodney Barreto. "Taking these proposed actions will likely prevent further restrictions on red snapper harvest in Gulf federal waters, which is where Florida anglers catch most of the fish."

A final public hearing on these rule proposals will take place during the FWC's February meeting in Panama City.

## Far-reaching gopher tortoise management plan approved

FWC Commissioners approved a unique, far-reaching plan during their September meeting to protect and preserve gopher tortoises and their habitats.

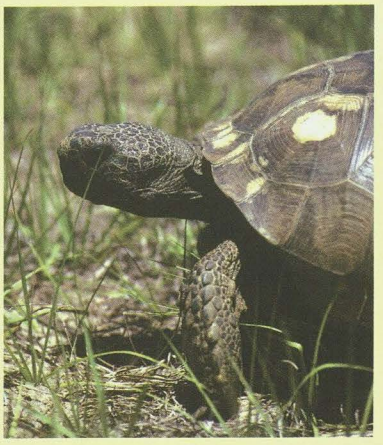
"This is a historic step forward in the state's approach to habitat and wildlife management," FWC Chairman Rodney Barreto said.

The plan, available at MyFWC.com/imperiledspecies, is the result of thousands of hours of work by FWC staff, scientists, stakeholders, interest groups and members of the public, Barreto said.

Final approval by the Commission places gopher tortoises in the "threatened" category and outlines broad goals and very specific steps for protection of the species and its habitats, said FWC Executive Director Ken Haddad.

New requirements call for relocating gopher tortoises away from construction areas into public and private habitat where the species can thrive, Barreto said.

"We want to make certain the gopher tortoise has the protections it needs, and we want to make Florida the national leader in adopting policies to protect and preserve native wildlife and habitats," Barreto said.



WILLIAM J. WEBER

## Yablonski new Commission Vice Chairman

One of the first items on the FWC's Sept. 12 agenda was election of a new Vice Chairman to replace David K. Meehan of St. Petersburg, whose term expired in August.

Brian Yablonski of Tallahassee got the nod from fellow commissioners to succeed Meehan as Vice Chairman. Yablonski is an attorney and has served on the FWC since January 2004.

FWC Commissioners are appointed by the governor to five-year terms and make decisions that guide conservation of Florida's fish and wildlife resources.

## New rules aid trap recovery and ease restrictions on recreational fold-up traps

The FWC approved rules on Sept. 13 to make it easier to recover or remove lobster and crab traps from state waters under certain conditions. The FWC also passed a rule to allow recreational fishers to use fold-up traps of any shape to harvest blue crabs.

The new rules will help spiny lobster, stone crab and blue crab fishers recover their traps following major storms by letting licensed trap fishers designate people to recover and possess their traps when the governor and FWC declare an emergency.

The rules also exempt local, state or federal officials from having to get FWC approval before removing traps and trap debris from areas where trapping is prohibited and modify the current definition of a derelict trap to account for a requirement that blue crab traps must now be marked with FWC trap tags.

In addition, the Commission approved rules to allow recreational fishers to use fold-up blue crab traps up to one cubic foot in volume that are not necessarily pyramid-shaped and delete a current provision limiting the base panel of fold-up traps to one square foot.

"These rules will help commercial fishers work together to recover traps after major storms, make it easier for officials to remove illegal traps and debris from places where they aren't allowed, and let recreational fishers use more than one kind of fold-up trap to catch blue crabs," said FWC Chairman Rodney Barreto.

CHARLES R. CRAWFORD

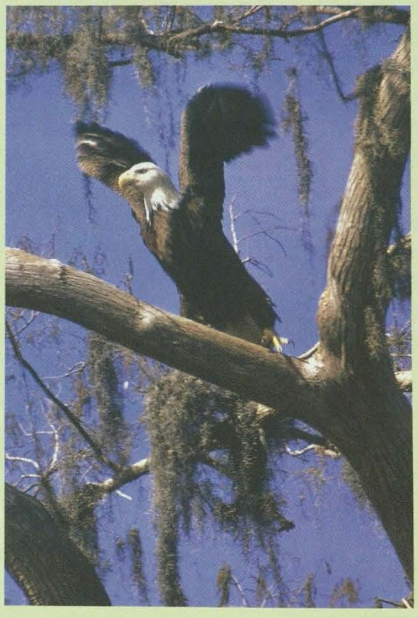
## Revised bald eagle draft management plan approved

The FWC approved the bald eagle revised draft management plan Sept. 12, giving staff the go-ahead to begin work on a final draft.

The second comment period on the plan ended on Sept. 14, and FWC staff will revise the plan to reflect comments received and will bring the plan up for its final hearing and approval at a future meeting.

Policy changes outlined in the draft management plan include regulation of a buffer zone around nests and requirements for permitting activities that violate guidelines described in the permitting framework of the draft plan.

The plan proposes adoption of a new rule to protect bald eagles and incorporates U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bald eagle guidelines.



WILLIAM J. WEBER

The FWC is moving to delist the species because of the increased number of bald eagles in Florida over the past few decades. The goal of the management plan is to maintain a stable or increasing bald eagle population throughout Florida.

The bald eagle still is classified as threatened by the FWC and will not be delisted until the management plan, developed with public input, is approved by FWC Commissioners. The draft management plan will ensure the bald eagle continues to be protected and thrive in Florida. The bald eagle also will remain protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

**These 2006-07 hunting and shooting incidents might not have occurred if the shooters or victims were not**

# Violating the cardinal rules of hunter safety

## Non-firearm related

*(Accidents/incidents while hunting, not involving the discharge of a firearm or bow, which caused injury or death of any person)*

A 45-year-old hunter was moving his 15-foot ladder stand to a new location. As he detached the top anchor strap and took a step down, the ladder shifted away from the tree. The hunter jumped from the ladder and landed on his left foot, resulting in a compound fracture to the left heel bone.

A hunter, having fallen asleep in his homemade ladder-type treestand, was awakened by the sound of his gun going off as he hit the ground. Other hunters in the area took him to the hospital where he was treated for five fractures to his pelvis and complications to a previous back injury. The hunter had taken a muscle relaxer earlier in the day and was not wearing a safety harness.

A 32-year-old man died as a result of a fall from a "lock-on" treestand. The stand was securely attached to the tree and there was no indication of any equipment malfunction. The hunter's hat was on a limb a considerable distance from the stand. It is believed the hunter either lost his balance and fell out of the tree while placing the hat on the limb or went to sleep and fell out of the stand. The hunter was not wearing any type of safety harness.

A 51-year-old man died as a result of a fall from a "self climbing" treestand. The victim's treestand seat was still in place 25 feet above the ground, but the separate footrest was found approximately 5 1/2 feet lower on the tree. The hunter's coveralls were slightly off his shoulders, leading investigators to believe he may have been removing them when he fell. The hunter was not wearing any type of safety harness.

## Non-hunting related

*(Other reported accidents/incidents on state-owned/managed lands, resulting from the discharge of a firearm or bow, which causes injury or death of any person(s), other than while hunting)*

During a concealed weapons class on the Babcock-Webb Wildlife Management Area shooting range, a student handed an instructor a revolver the instructor assumed was unloaded. The revolver was discharged by the instructor. The bullet passed through some paperwork, the wooden top of a picnic table and hit the student in the left leg.

## Hunting related

A 24-year-old hunter had just climbed down from a treestand when his brother, mistaking him for a deer, shot him. The 24-year-old died at the scene. He was not wearing hunter orange.

At a hunting camp, a hunter was cleaning the barrel of his muzzleloader prior to hunting. After cleaning the bore, he placed a percussion cap in the gun to discharge any debris in the barrel, not knowing the gun was still loaded after being loaned to a friend about four years earlier. When he pulled the trigger, the gun went off, firing a bullet through a front window and striking a man standing on the front porch. The victim was transported to the hospital where he was treated for a superficial wound to his lower back.

While deer hunting in a heavily wooded area, a hunter got up to change locations. He tripped over a palmetto bush and fell on his firearm. The rifle's safety was off, and the firearm discharged, hitting the hunter in the left forearm. The wound was minor.

Two hunters in the same hunting party parked next to each other, left their vehicles and walked in separate directions. Both were wearing blaze orange but were having difficulty seeing each other due to extremely foggy weather. As a deer crossed the road, one hunter shot at it and one pellet from the 00 buckshot hit the other hunter in the thigh. He was treated at the emergency room and released.

Two hunters were hunting snipe from a swamp buggy. A snipe flew up to the right and in front of the hunter on the right-hand side of the buggy. He shot the bird. Realizing he hit the bird, he raised his left hand in celebration as the other hunter in the buggy shot at the same snipe. Shot from the second hunter's round struck the tip of the first hunter's middle finger.

A hunter returned to his truck for a lunch break and leaned his firearm on his left hip. He then tried to open a folding chair using both hands. A part of the chair hit the gun's trigger and it discharged. Based on inspection of the firearm, the highly-worn safety appeared to be in the off position.

A father, his son and his friend spotted a deer as they were driving. The father stopped the truck and he and the family bulldog got out. The father had his shotgun in hand and decided he needed his scoped rifle, so he placed the shotgun on the tailgate of the truck with the muzzle facing the driver's seat. He took the rifle out of the truck and walked down the road with the dog. Not seeing the deer, he and the dog returned to the truck. The dog jumped onto the tailgate and stepped on the shotgun. The firearm discharged and pellets went through the driver's seat. Pellets hit the 9-year-old son in his left ankle and calf. He was taken to the hospital, treated and released the next day.

While standing up on a buggy, a hunter attempted to take a Derringer .38 Special out of his left back pocket. As he was doing so, the pistol went off and shot him in his left buttocks.

A 12-year-old was seated in a double-seat ladder while his grandfather, on the ground, handed a loaded shotgun up to him. The grandson placed the stock of the firearm on a foot rest and leaned the barrel on a shooting rail. He accidentally kicked the firearm, which fell out of the stand. As it fell, the hammer struck the foot rest and the gun discharged. One pellet struck the grandson's left thumb, cutting it but not breaking the bone.

One afternoon, with permission from his mother, a lone 15-year-old went hunting near his home. He spotted a deer that looked like a 6-point buck. He followed the deer in hope of a clear shot. While walking across uneven terrain, he tripped, fell and dropped a single-shot shotgun. The loaded gun discharged a slug which entered the left side of the hunter's lower abdomen. He was treated and released from the hospital. His mother was charged with allowing her son, a minor, to be in possession of a firearm without adult supervision.

# Field **Notes**

*Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission sworn personnel are fully constituted police officers with the authority to enforce all laws of the state, not just those relating to resource conservation.*

## Cleaning up

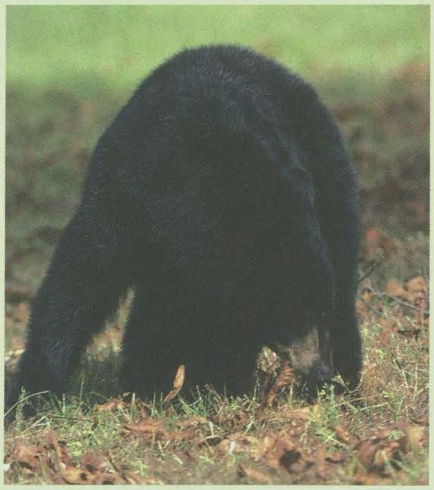
Officers Danny Arnette and Alan Kirchinger were checking fishing areas when they came across a man leaving the Blackwater River. As they talked to him, they realized he had the makings of a methamphetamine lab in his truck. The officers found a glass pipe that tested positive for meth. Believing a campsite on the river might be contaminated by methamphetamine manufacturing, the officers secured the area. The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office responded along with FWC Lt. Jeff Hahr, Investigator Eddie Gatlin and Officer Darrell Johnson. The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement secured and processed the truck and campsite. The Division of Forestry was contacted and agreed to clean the campsite. The man was arrested for drug paraphernalia and possession charges. He had five outstanding warrants for drug-related charges in Alabama.

## Quite a story

Officers Willie Mailoto and Danny Arnette were on water patrol detail in Choctawhatchee Bay when they responded to a call for assistance by Eglin Range Patrol. Two youngsters were diving in a river when they had the fright of their life – they found a body on the bottom. The Okaloosa Sheriff's Office responded with their dive team and recovered the body of a training mannequin that had been left underwater. The youngsters still had quite a story for show-and-tell at school.

## Capsized

While on water patrol on the Santa Fe River, Investigator Ken Holmes came across a group of 18 juveniles and three adults in distress. They were halfway into a 7-mile canoe trip when one of the canoes capsized, and they could not right it. One of the juveniles showed signs of heat exhaustion, and one of the counselors thought he had been bitten in the leg by a snake. Investigator Holmes passed out water and fruit, righted the sunken canoe and examined the counselor's leg, which showed symptoms of stinging nettle rather than a bite. Investigator Holmes escorted the entire group back to the livery where they had rented the canoes and provided the livery operator with boating safety tips and responsibilities when renting to inexperienced customers.



WILLIAM J. WEBER

## All in a day's work

Officers Stephen Wicker and Marc Shea responded to two bear complaints, removed a python from beneath the deck of a private residence, and responded to assist on an incident where three manatees became trapped inside a shallow tidal pool during low tide. The manatees were provided shade and continually showered with water until high tide allowed them return to a safer depth.

## Runaway boat

Officer Seth Wingard and Lt. William Burns responded to a report of a runaway vessel involving an injury. Upon arrival, they saw a small, unoccupied skiff traveling in circles. Both occupants had already been recovered by a good samaritan. The husband and wife had been motoring when the tiller handle broke. The motor turned sharply with the free end of the tiller handle abruptly stopping against a bench seat, causing both occupants to be thrown from the vessel. The vessel circled three times, and each time, the couple avoided being hit by diving under their runaway boat. On the fourth pass, the wife was struck as the vessel passed overhead. Her shirt was ripped off by the outboard motor and was still attached to the skeg when the officers finally caught the vessel. The wife received minor injuries but refused medical treatment. Officer William Green assisted in stopping the runaway vessel.

## De cash for decoy

Officers Jessi Lee and Matt Griffith attended a court hearing for two subjects who had shot a decoy deer. Both subjects were found guilty of the charges. Part of their sentencing included paying for a new decoy deer.

## Hooked

Officer Rich Wilcox responded to a complaint by an individual who reported seeing three males setting hooks along the edge of a pond. The complainant had a vehicle description but did not get the tag number. Officer Wilcox located numerous gator hooks, two of which held small alligators. He released the alligators unharmed. He also searched the area and found a vehicle matching the witness' description at a nearby residence. Officers Wilcox and Eric Meade later visited the residence and interviewed several people. They were able to determine the suspects were teenagers ranging from 13 to 15 years old. The suspects admitted to setting the hooks and were warned by Officer Wilcox about the violations.

## They just couldn't hide

Officer Sarah Hahner, with K-9 Sadie, gave a demonstration to a private school group. Sadie demonstrated her expertise in finding hidden alligator meat and tracking students' paths after they tried to hide from her. The under-12-year-old group was very excited and grateful for the opportunity to learn about the FWC officer and Sadie.

# Preserving and playing on the Perdido

*By Faith Eidse*

The shifting sands of the upper Perdido River form large point bars of expansive sand, enticing to paddlers, swimmers, hikers and sunbathers. The forested river forms Florida's western border with Alabama and is a tannin-stained blackwater stream in its lower reaches. Here, rapidly disappearing pitcher plant bogs, threatened gopher tortoises, migratory neotropical birds and stands of Atlantic white cedar can all be appreciated.

Floridians love to canoe, fish and swim along the river from a few landings reached by state and county roads. Now increased access is available on some 5,456 acres, including 15 miles of river frontage, which were purchased by the Northwest Florida Water Management District for public ownership. This acquisition was made possible in partnership with The Conservation Fund and was part of a larger nation-wide timberland purchase by the Nature Conservancy and The Conservation Fund that was

*The sand-bottom Perdido River features expansive point bars such as the sand bar in Alabama across from Fillingim Landing. The District plans to add a boardwalk, small boat launch, grills, tables and picnic pavilion at the landing.*

GEORGANN PENSON

*The Perdido River flows about 44 miles from southern Alabama to Perdido Bay in Escambia County*

designed to ultimately extend natural protection of the Perdido River across state lines.

The river flows about 44 miles from southern Alabama to Perdido Bay, draining the western half of Escambia County, Fla., which is largely timberland and farmland. Florida tributaries include Brushy, Cowdevil, McDavid, Alligator, Jacks Branch, Elevenmile, Eightmile and Bayou creeks and Tarkiln Bayou. Water quality is quite good along the river, but there are problems with discharges to Perdido Bay from Elevenmile Creek and from developed areas that may contribute polluted stormwater runoff.

Because this purchase is upstream from The Nature Conservancy's Rainwater Preserve, three state parks (Big Lagoon, Perdido Key and Tarkiln Bayou Preserve) and the Gulf Islands National Seashore, it will help protect these conservation areas and their surrounding waters.

An exceptional benefit to the residents of Escambia County and to the public in general, especially in a time of escalating real estate prices, the river corridor and woodlands have been re-opened for recreation after several decades of closure to the public. District owned tracts are designated the Perdido River Water Management Area (WMA) and are managed jointly with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

District goals are to protect water resources and restore habitats to their natural state and condition, especially on the 1,851 acres of disturbed longleaf pine/wiregrass habitat located north of U.S. Highway 90. The 2,134 acres south of Highway 90 take in numerous stands of old growth slash pine with titi competition, which will be managed using prescribed fire and other techniques.

"Providing recreation to the public is an important secondary benefit and will continue as long as it does not harm water resources and habitats," said William O. Cleckley, director of the District's Division of Land Management and Acquisition. "Previously, the property had been leased to hunt clubs for several decades and a few sites have colorful and troubled histories. The District's desire is to improve some of the existing riverfront sites to allow family-oriented recreation, and enhance woodlands to provide family hunts, hiking, horse riding and the like."

An Escambia County Recreational Water Trail is being developed with a canoe/small boat launch at Fillingim Landing, north of Cantonment. The District will soon be requesting bids to construct the launch, which includes a boardwalk with floating dock, parking, picnic pavilion, tables and grills. The launch will be limited to canoes, kayaks and small carry-in boats with a 10 horsepower maximum for quiet enjoyment of the river. Group campsites at Fillingim and nearby Otto Hill are also proposed.

"We've held two public workshops and several stakeholder meetings with user groups to plan suitable recreation for people who use the river," Cleckley said. "We want people to enjoy this river and woodlands while maintaining its high water quality and diverse habitats."

The District has already improved and opened two public access points downstream from Fillingim: The Pipes Landing for day use and Sand

**The Perdido River Water Management Area offers nearly 5,500 acres of publicly-owned woods and 15 miles of river frontage**

Landing open 24 hours a day. The Pipes was opened first, but was temporarily closed several times to make repairs and curb unauthorized activities. The Sand Landing ramp located just north of Highway 90 was recently renovated in partnership with the FWC. Further improvements are planned.

Beginning Oct. 1, the District enhanced FWC patrols on the entire WMA to address such unauthorized activities as possession or consumption of intoxicating beverages. The patrols will also cover several small boat landings on the District's nearby Escambia River WMA on weekends and holidays.

"The area is quite remote, and we've already experienced littering and property damage from large parties," said Steve Brown, associate lands manager at the District. "It's because of inappropriate uses that the lands were closed to the public for more than two decades. We want to change that and open them up for a variety of family activities."

Most of the natural habitats in the river floodplain and along eight perennial streams are in good condition and will require little restoration or enhancement. However, an area near Muscogee Road Bridge that has eroded due to extensive use may require restoration.

"On the entire property we will permit quota deer hunting and bank fishing as long neither creates erosion," Cleckley said. "People can also canoe and will eventually be allowed to primitive camp along the river."

The FWC was able to move quickly to establish a small game hunting season soon after the property was purchased and has already sought public input and developed the rules for a more comprehensive hunting program for the 2007-08 season (see the regulations brochure, MyFWC.com/hunting/wma/2007-08/Northwest/PerdidoRiver.pdf).

North of Beulah, local equestrian clubs have begun mapping horse trails off Frank Reeder Road. They are following guidelines to route trails on land contours and stay out of low-lying watershed features, such as streams and wetlands. Equestrians also want to establish a trailhead for horse trailers and campers among old growth live oaks and the District plans to establish hiking trails in the area.

The District would also like to preserve Muscogee Cemetery, one of several burial grounds in the area dating to the early 1900s. Area families want to conduct an archaeological survey and restore Muscogee Cemetery. They have created a Web site replete with stories by lifelong resident, Herman Arthur Merritt, at home.mchsi.com/~jerrym151. He describes growing up in the area under naval hot air balloon flights and getting to know former neighbors who may be buried there. One was a freed slave who arrived in the late 1800s. She supported herself and her son by taking in laundry for sawmill employees and washing it in a flowing spring.

The District wants to conduct an initial archaeological survey of the entire WMA, including cemeteries. However, it would like to turn over protection and upkeep of cemeteries to area residents and descendents. Given nearby populous Pensacola, the District is moving deliberately to accommodate family oriented public recreation activities, while protecting this natural treasure. FW

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*Faith Eidse is the Northwest Florida Water Management District public information specialist.*

# Wildlife **Watch**

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JACK ROGERS

JACK ROGERS

***Top to bottom:*** *Ornate chorus frog; red-bellied woodpecker; belted kingfisher.*

## November

- Northern harriers can be observed gliding low over the marshes
- Ornate chorus frogs begin calling
- Greater sandhill cranes arrive to winter
- White pelicans begin migrating south to Florida
- Peak of deer rut in Central and North Florida
- Put out suet feeders for downy, hairy, red-bellied and red-headed woodpeckers
- Spectacular aerial courtship displays can be observed as bald eagles begin their nesting season
- Cypress trees begin turning rust color
- Florida manatees head south to warm water sites when temperatures drop; seasonal Manatee Speed Zones change on Florida's waterways
- Cedar waxwings, phoebes, robins and other northern songbirds arrive for the winter
- Watch for Florida black bears along the roads

## December

- Nesting season begins for ospreys in South Florida
- Goldfinches plentiful in North Florida
- Listen for the courtship hooting of great horned and barred owls
- Snail kites in South Florida begin courtship
- Opossums breed now through mid-summer
- Increased number of belted kingfishers can be observed as winter migrants join resident populations
- December and January are the best months for watching waterfowl on wetlands, lakes and prairies
- Manatees congregate at natural springs and industrial warm water sites
- Right whales can be observed off the East Coast, north of Sebastian Inlet
- Bald eagles start hatching in North Florida

# Calendar

## November

**Nov. 3:** Pioneer Day Chinsegut Nature Center; Brooksville; (352) 754-6722; MyFWC.com/Chinsegut.

**Nov. 8:** Pine Needle Craft Class. Chinsegut Nature Center; Brooksville; (352) 754-6722; MyFWC.com/Chinsegut.

**Nov. 8-11:** Ft. Myers Boat Show, Harborside Event Center and City Yacht Basin; (239) 337-9210; www.fortmyersboatshow.com.

**Nov. 9-11:** Alafia Fat Tire Festival. Alafia River State Park; (813) 689-5109; www.swampclub.org.

**Nov. 9-11:** Florida Folk Festival. Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park; White Springs; 1-877-635-3655; www.floridastateparks.org.

**Nov. 9-11:** American Indian Arts Celebration. Clewiston; (863) 902-1113; www.ahtahthiki.com.

**Nov. 10:** Birding 101. Chinsegut Nature Center; Brooksville; (352) 754-6722; MyFWC.com/Chinsegut.

**Nov. 10-11:** Ocali Country Days. Silver River State Park; Ocala; www.floridastateparks.org.

**Nov. 10-11:** Florida Sportsman Fishing Show. Central Florida Fairgrounds; Orlando; floridasportsman.com/shows.

**Nov. 10-11:** Homosassa Arts Crafts & Seafood Festival. Homosassa; (352) 628-2666; www.homosassaseafoodfestival.com.

**Nov. 12-14:** Sailfish Cup Invitational. Miami Beach; 1-866-482-7529; sailfishcup.com.

**Nov. 13:** Florida Bats by Cyndi and George Marks. Chinsegut Nature Center; Brooksville; (352) 754-6722; MyFWC.com/Chinsegut.

**Nov. 14:** FWRI Seminar Series. Christopher Fonnesbeck. FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute; St. Petersburg; MyFWC.com.

**Nov. 17:** Breakfast with the Animals. Smithsonian Marine Station; Fort Pierce; (772) 465-3271; www.sms.si.edu.

**Nov. 17:** Lee County Sheriff's Office Open Bass Fishing Tournament. Cape Coral; (239) 945-7188; www.capecoral-bassclub.com.

**Nov. 17:** Paynes Prairie by Bicycle. Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park; Gainesville; (352) 466-4100; www.floridastateparks.org.

**Nov. 17:** Wetlands Tour. Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park; Tallahassee; (850) 224-5950; www.floridastateparks.org.

**Nov. 17:** Tampa's Cigar Heritage Festival. Ybor City Museum State Park; Tampa; (813) 247-1434; www.floridastateparks.org.

**Nov. 17-18:** Leave No Trace Trainer Course. Hillsborough River State Park; Tampa; (813) 987-6771; www.lnt.org.

**Nov. 17-25:** Thanksgiving Boogie & Turkey Meet Skydiving. Zephyrhills; 1-800-888-5867; www.skydivecity.com.

**Nov. 18:** Matlacha Pass Estuary Day Paddle. Matlacha Pass Aquatic Preserve. Punta Gorda; (239) 338-2556 x240; www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org .

**Nov. 21:** Treasure Coast Regional Herpetological Society. Oxbow Eco-Center; Port St. Lucie; (772) 785-5883; www.stlucieco.gov.

**Nov. 23:** Moonlight Paddle Kayaking. The Manatee Center; Fort Pierce; 1-888-652-9257; www.manateecenter.com.

**Nov. 24:** Bird Walk on Pepper Creek Trail. Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park; (352) 628-5343; www.floridastateparks.org.

**Nov. 29-Dec. 2:** Islamorada Sailfish Tournament. Islamorada; (305) 852-2102; www.islamoradasailfishtournament.com.

**Nov. 29-Dec. 2:** St. Petersburg Boat Show. Bayfront Center Yacht Basin; 400 First Street South; St. Petersburg; (954) 764-7642; www.showmanagement.com.

**Nov. 30-Dec. 2**: Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Workshop. West Palm Beach; (561) 625-5126; MyFWC.com/huntered/bow.

## December

**Dec. 1:** Map and Compass Class. Chinsegut Nature Center; Brooksville; (352) 754-6722; MyFWC.com/Chinsegut.

**Dec. 2:** Learn to Kayak! John D. MacArthur Beach State Park; North Palm Beach; (561) 624-6952; www.macarthurbeach.org.

**Dec. 5-6:** FWC Commission Meeting. Marriott Key Largo; 103800 Overseas Hwy.; Key Largo; (305) 453-0582; MyFWC.com.

**Dec. 7:** Chinsegut Night Walk. Chinsegut Nature Center; Brooksville; (352) 754-6722; MyFWC.com/Chinsegut.

**Dec. 8:** Introductory Archery Workshop. Equipment provided by FWC. Pre-register. Chinsegut Nature Center; Brooksville; (352) 754-6722; MyFWC.com/Chinsegut.

**Dec. 8:** Boca Raton Boat Parade. Intracoastal Waterway on Flagler Drive; West Palm Beach; (561) 393-7806; www.bocaratonboatparade.org.

**Dec. 8:** Lighted Boat Parade. Punta Gorda; (941) 639-8721; www.fishville.com.

**Dec. 15:** Pack & Paddle. St. Lucie River; Oxbow Eco-Center; (772) 785-5883; www.stlucieco.gov.

## Fishing and hunting seasons

**Oct. 13-Nov. 11:** Archery Season, N.W. Hunting Zone.

**Oct. 27-Nov. 4:** Muzzleloading Gun Season, Central Hunting Zone.

**Oct. 27-Nov. 15:** Deer-Dog Training, N.W. Hunting Zone.

**Oct. 27-Jan. 6:** General Gun Season, South Hunting Zone.

**Nov. 1-Dec. 31:** Spotted Seatrout Closed Season in the South Region.

**Nov. 1-April 14:** Red Snapper Closed Season in the Gulf only.

**Nov. 3-9:** Antlerless Deer Season, South Hunting Zone.

**Nov. 10-Jan. 6:** Fall Turkey Season, Central and South Hunting Zones.

**Nov. 10-Jan. 20:** General Gun Season, Central Hunting Zone.

**Nov. 10-March 2:** Quail and Gray Squirrel Season, all zones.

**Nov. 16-18 & Feb. 14-24:** Muzzleloading Gun Season, N.W. Hunting Zone.

**Nov. 17-23:** Antlerless Deer Season, Central Hunting Zone.

**Nov. 22-25 & Dec. 8-Jan. 13:** Fall Turkey Season, N.W. Hunting Zone.

**Nov. 22-25 & Dec. 8-Feb. 13:** General Gun Season, N.W. Hunting Zone.

**Nov. 26-Dec. 2:** Crossbow Season, N.W. Hunting Zone.

**Dec. 1-Feb. 29:** Snook Closed Season in the Gulf, Monroe County and Everglades National Park.

**Dec. 1-March 1:** Bobcat and Otter Season, all zones.

**Dec. 15-21:** Antlerless Deer Season, N.W. Hunting Zone.

**Dec. 15-Jan. 31:** Snook Closed Season in the Atlantic.

**For information on hunting and fishing seasons, visit MyFWC.com.**

# It's called "hunting"

*By Andy Sabol ~ Illustration by John Papesca*

Not far from our house, a small creek flowed through a rather steep ravine. There was a dirt road alongside the creek, and everyone in town just drove their cars right into the rock-filled creek to wash them.

It was early one Saturday morning in November when Dad "invited" me to help him wash the car. I was about 8 years old at the time, and my part of the wash-job was the wheels.

We had been at the chore for only a short while when I looked up on the far side of the ravine and saw two men dressed for hunting and carrying shotguns. I pointed them out to my dad, since he was on the other side of the car. He told me to come around to his side, the side away from the hunters.

"You just don't know how people will react when a rabbit or bird flushes," he said.

As we watched them slowly walk along the side of the steep ravine, we saw, way up ahead of them, a rabbit slowly hopping along. It stayed about the same distance ahead of the hunters as the whole group moved forward.

"Let's tell them there is a rabbit just ahead of them," I excitedly told my dad.

"No, we're not going to do that," Dad answered.

"Why not? That's what they're looking for, isn't it?"

"Son, now you tell me, what are those two men doing up there?"

"They're hunting."

"Exactly. They are hunting. If we tell them where the rabbit is, then we will spoil their hunting... plus it wouldn't be very fair to the rabbit, would it?"

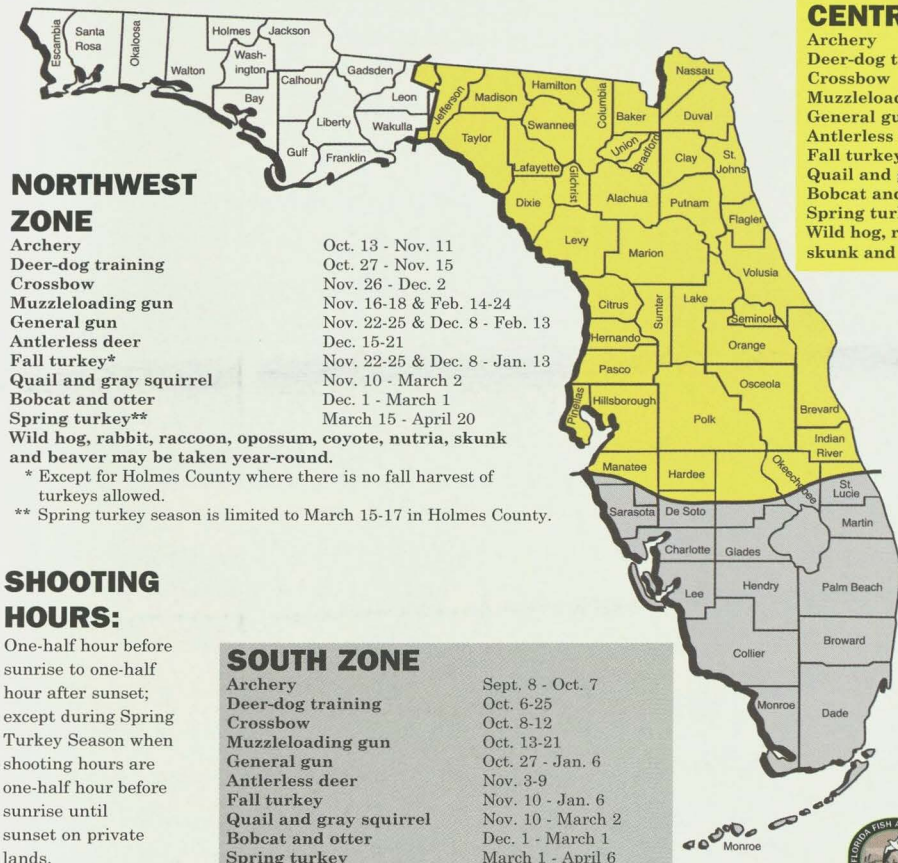
"I guess not."

And so, we watched as the two hunters slowly made their way along the side of the ravine, with the rabbit just as slowly hopping ahead of them, until they were all out of sight.

We never did hear a shot fired, so I guess the men had a nice long hunt, and the rabbit made out OK also.

Guess that's why they call it "hunting." FW

# 2007-2008 FLORIDA HUNTING SEASONS




## NORTHWEST ZONE

| | |
|---|---|
| **Archery** | Oct. 13 - Nov. 11 |
| **Deer-dog training** | Oct. 27 - Nov. 15 |
| **Crossbow** | Nov. 26 - Dec. 2 |
| **Muzzleloading gun** | Nov. 16-18 & Feb. 14-24 |
| **General gun** | Nov. 22-25 & Dec. 8 - Feb. 13 |
| **Antlerless deer** | Dec. 15-21 |
| **Fall turkey*** | Nov. 22-25 & Dec. 8 - Jan. 13 |
| **Quail and gray squirrel** | Nov. 10 - March 2 |
| **Bobcat and otter** | Dec. 1 - March 1 |
| **Spring turkey**** | March 15 - April 20 |

**Wild hog, rabbit, raccoon, opossum, coyote, nutria, skunk and beaver may be taken year-round.**

* Except for Holmes County where there is no fall harvest of turkeys allowed.

** Spring turkey season is limited to March 15-17 in Holmes County.

## CENTRAL ZONE

| | |
|---|---|
| **Archery** | Sept. 22 - Oct. 21 |
| **Deer-dog training** | Oct. 6-25 |
| **Crossbow** | Oct. 22-26 |
| **Muzzleloading gun** | Oct. 27 - Nov. 4 |
| **General gun** | Nov. 10 - Jan. 20 |
| **Antlerless deer** | Nov. 17-23 |
| **Fall turkey** | Nov. 10 - Jan. 6 |
| **Quail and gray squirrel** | Nov. 10 - March 2 |
| **Bobcat and otter** | Dec. 1 - March 1 |
| **Spring turkey** | March 15 - April 20 |

**Wild hog, rabbit, raccoon, opossum, coyote, nutria, skunk and beaver may be taken year-round.**

## SHOOTING HOURS:

One-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset; except during Spring Turkey Season when shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise until sunset on private lands.

## SOUTH ZONE

| | |
|---|---|
| **Archery** | Sept. 8 - Oct. 7 |
| **Deer-dog training** | Oct. 6-25 |
| **Crossbow** | Oct. 8-12 |
| **Muzzleloading gun** | Oct. 13-21 |
| **General gun** | Oct. 27 - Jan. 6 |
| **Antlerless deer** | Nov. 3-9 |
| **Fall turkey** | Nov. 10 - Jan. 6 |
| **Quail and gray squirrel** | Nov. 10 - March 2 |
| **Bobcat and otter** | Dec. 1 - March 1 |
| **Spring turkey** | March 1 - April 6 |

**Wild hog, rabbit, raccoon, opossum, coyote, nutria, skunk and beaver may be taken year-round.**

**Wildlife management area regulations may differ from the dates on this poster.**

**The *2007-08 Florida Hunting Regulations* handbook and wildlife management area brochures are available at county tax collectors' offices, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission regional offices and online at MyFWC.com/hunting.**

**Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**

MyFWC.com

## MIGRATORY GAME BIRD SEASONS

**SHOOTING HOURS:**

- Migratory game birds: one-half hour before sunrise to sunset
- Dove during the first phase: noon to sunset
- Dove during the second and third phase: one-half hour before sunrise to sunset
- Crow: one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset

| SPECIES | SEASON DATES | DAILY BAG LIMITS | POSSESSION LIMITS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rail and common moorhen: | Sept. 1 - Nov. 9 | | |
| King and clapper rails | | 15 | 30 singly or in aggregate |
| Sora and Virginia rails | | 25 | 25 singly or in aggregate |
| Common moorhen | | 15 | 30 |
| September Canada goose (Lake Seminole, Jackson County) | Sept. 1-26 | 5 | 10 |
| Special September duck | Sept. 22-26 | 4* | 8* |
| Mourning and white-winged dove | Oct. 6-29<br>Nov. 10-25<br>Dec. 8 - Jan. 6 | 12** | 24 singly or in aggregate** |
| Snipe | Nov. 1 - Feb. 15 | 8 | 16 |
| Waterfowl and coot | Nov. 17-25<br>Dec. 8 - Jan. 27 | 6 ducks***<br>15 coots<br>5 mergansers**** | 12<br>30<br>10**** |
| Youth Waterfowl Days | Feb. 2-3 | | |
| Canada goose (Lake Seminole, Jackson County) | Nov. 17-25<br>Dec. 1 - Jan. 30 | 5 | 10 |
| Snow, blue and Ross' geese | Nov. 17-25<br>Dec. 8 - Jan. 27 | 15 | No limit |
| Woodcock | Dec. 15 - Jan. 13 | 3 | 6 |
| Crow | Aug. 11 - Oct. 28 (Sat. & Sun. only)<br>Nov. 11 - Feb. 18 | No limit | No limit |

* Bag/possession limits are 4/8 teal and wood ducks, no more than 2/4 of which may be wood ducks.

** Bag/possession limits are 12/24 mourning and white-winged doves, singly or in aggregate.

*** Six duck limit shall consist of no more than 4 mallards (no more than 2 of which may be female); 1 black duck; 1 mottled duck (Florida duck); 1 fulvous whistling-duck; 1 pintail; 2 canvasback; 2 redheads; 2 wood ducks; 2 scaup; and 4 scoters. All other species of duck (except harlequin) may be taken up to the six duck daily limit. Taking or attempting to take brant or harlequin ducks is prohibited.

**** Bag/possession limits are 5/10 mergansers, no more than 2/4 of which may be hooded.

## *Wildlife Alert!*

### REPORT FISH AND WILDLIFE LAW VIOLATORS

Those who violate Florida's fish and wildlife laws are stealing from us all. Obey the law to ensure that fish and wildlife resources can be enjoyed by future generations.

Do your part by reporting violations to a local FWC law enforcement office by calling **1-888-404-FWCC (3922) or #FWC and *FWC from a cell phone. To report online, visit MyFWC.com/law/alert.**

You may be eligible for a cash reward and can remain anonymous.

# Where do you answer the call of the wild?

Photo: Gus Holzer

FWC law enforcement is not a typical 9-to-5 job. Officers work day and night. Their 'patrol' vehicle may be an airboat, helicopter or swamp buggy, and their 'beat' may be a swamp, forest or as far as 200 miles offshore.

Answer the call of the wild. If you want to help protect Florida's natural resources and people – become an FWC law enforcement officer.

Call (866) FWC-HIRE (392-4473).

**Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**

Division of Law Enforcement

MyFWC.com

**Patrol, Protect, Preserve**